THE Blue BEAGLE

CRITTERS
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FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

Critters

FEATURING

THE Blue BEAGLE

Always a bit ahead of his time, Tim Fuller published a funny-animal anthology, *Hardboiled Animal Stories*, way back in 1982—four years before *Critters*. Fuller, whose Blue Beagle also appeared in the legendary all-funny-animal second issue of *Charlton Bullseye* (alongside Mark Armstrong's Jack Bunny and Arn Saba's Neil the Horse), joined the *Critters* gang in #15. After another short Beagle story in #18, Fuller launched his ambitious "Watchdogs" serial, a media/politics satire that has run for seven chapters (one apiece in #22, 28, 31, 34, 38—and two in this one).

Fuller is a meticulous craftsman with a day job, so it'll be a while before the next "Blue Beagle"—but watch for a short-short in *Critters* #50 this Christmas.

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No good news this time, friends: Critters' *new sales figures are in, they continue to be feeble, and so it looks like* Critters *#50 will be the last regular issue—at least for the time being. I'd break the news to you more gently if I could think of a way to do so, but I can't.*

Still, we plan to celebrate the magazine's 50-issue run (certainly a strong one by any standard) with a triple-size, super-duper, blow-out-all-the-stops finale edition that will make our previous Christmas extravaganzas look like Garfield greeting cards. Among the creators who have signed up for this issue are: Tim Fuller, Peter Gullerud, J.P. Morgan, Mike Kazaleh, Ken Macklin, Steve Purcell, Stan Sakai, Stephen DeStefano, Ty Templeton, Anthony Van Bruggen, William Van Horn—and a few Critters *virgins whose names may be familiar to some of you: Sergio Aragones, Gotlib, Doug (*Eye of Mongombo*) Gray, Arn Saba, and Scott Shaw! And this is just a tentative list, mind you—so expect a few surprises when the mag finally does pop up in stores sometime in mid-December.*

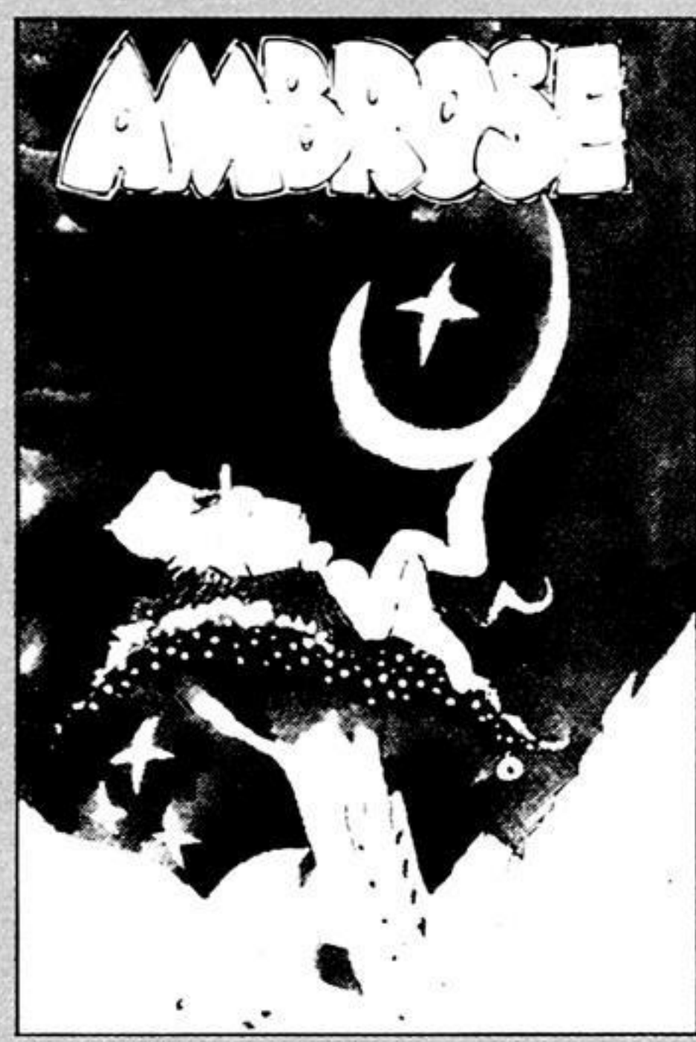
Before you start mourning for Critters, *bear in mind that that final issue is still a full half a year away . . .and before we get to #50, we've got another half-dozen issues to go: a William Van Horn "Ambrose" issue; another Tom Stazer "Lionheart" tale; and the very, very long-awaited conclusion to "Birthright," by Steven A. Gallacci and Monika Livingston, which will eat up #47-49 all by its lonesome.*

And let's remember that when Critters *shuffles off this mortal coil, it will leave a couple of bouncy children: the indomitable* Usagi Yojimbo *is celebrating its 20th issue around Christmas, and the new* Fission Chicken *comic is gallantly battling murderous market conditions in an attempt to stay afloat. (Buy a copy or three and give to your friends!) There will also be some good news for Captain Jack fans by the end of the year—and Tim Fuller has a lot of great ideas for the Blue Beagle that will have to be told somewhere,* Critters *or no* Critters.

So, although Critters *will not be with us much longer, many of the fine series and creators the book introduced or brought to a wider readership will continue apace. What more could you ask for?*

—KIM THOMPSON

COMING NEXT ISSUE



© 1989 William Van Horn

***Critters* #45.** The celebrated artist of *Duck Tales, Angst,* and *Nervous Rex* returns with a book-length portfolio of strips starring his vaudevillian frog Ambrose—plus a watercolor cover!

ALSO ON SALE NEXT MONTH

© 1989 Donna Barr

***Stinz* #3.** Steinheld has to defeat a difficult obstacle course that was never intended for halfhorses. More laughs and adventure from Donna Barr! *ON SALE IN EARLY SEPTEMBER.*

IN THE CORRIDORS DEEP BENEATH MALT DINGY* WORLD WE FIND...
THE Blue BEAGLE
HE SEEMS SORT OF SHAKY TO ME. IS HE GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT, DR. STRANGEDOVE?
OF COURSE, HERR DINGY, HE'S 'UST DAZED FROM ZA INJECTION OF ZA CROKE-A-COLA ZERUM. BUT IT VILL MAKE HIM EXTREMELY OPEN TO ALL YOUR ZUGGESTIONS!
THERE AREN'T ANY SIDE EFFECTS, ARE THERE?
OH, DID I FORGET TO MENTION ZUMTING?
BEFORE ZE DELIRIUM CLEARS, HE VILL RELIVE ZA MOST FRIGHTENING EVENTS OF HIS LIFE!
WELL, TAKE HIM OUT AND DUMP HIM ON THE JUNGLE RIDE. WE'LL PICK HIM UP LATER WHEN HE'S THROUGH HALLUCINATING!
* PRONOUNCED: Din'-Jee

SLOWLY I OPENED MY EYES TO THE HOT ASIAN SUN THAT BEAT DOWN ON THIS RICE PADDY I WAS CROSSING.

MY GOD!! I'M BACK IN THE WAR!!

Vietnam - Aug 8th 1969

This is the most frightening experience of my life.

I'm now alone, lost, scared, homesick, I have what we call...

G.I. BLUES

by TIM FULLER

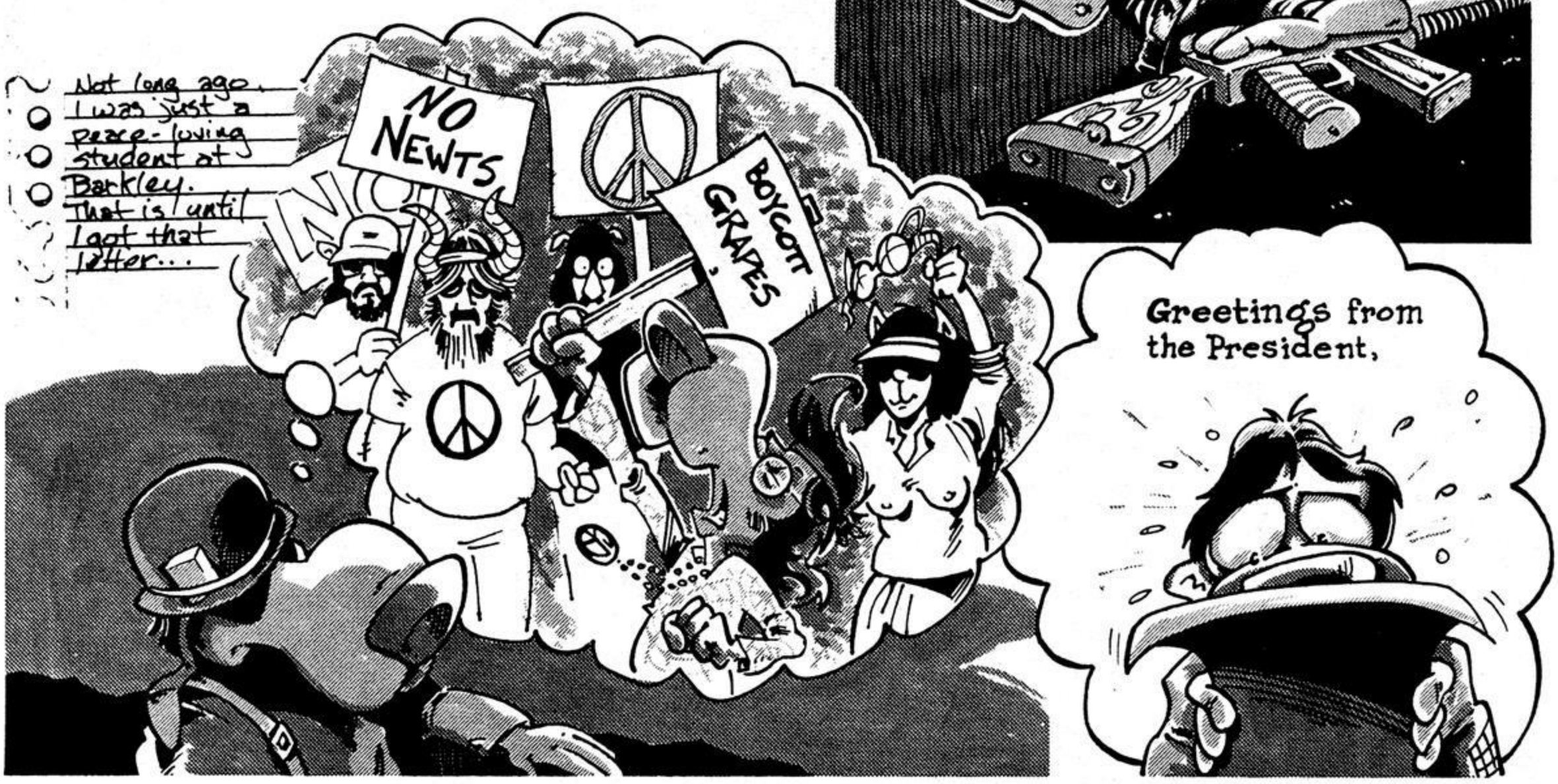
It still doesn't seem possible that I could be so far from home, and in a place as hostile as this.

I was nearing the edge of this scorched valley, where we'd been ambushed last night.

The squad had been pinned down during the fire-fight. But I had been separated from the rest.

It looked like there was nothing else to do but finish the mission alone!

Not long ago, I was just a peace-loving student at Barkley. That is until I got that letter...



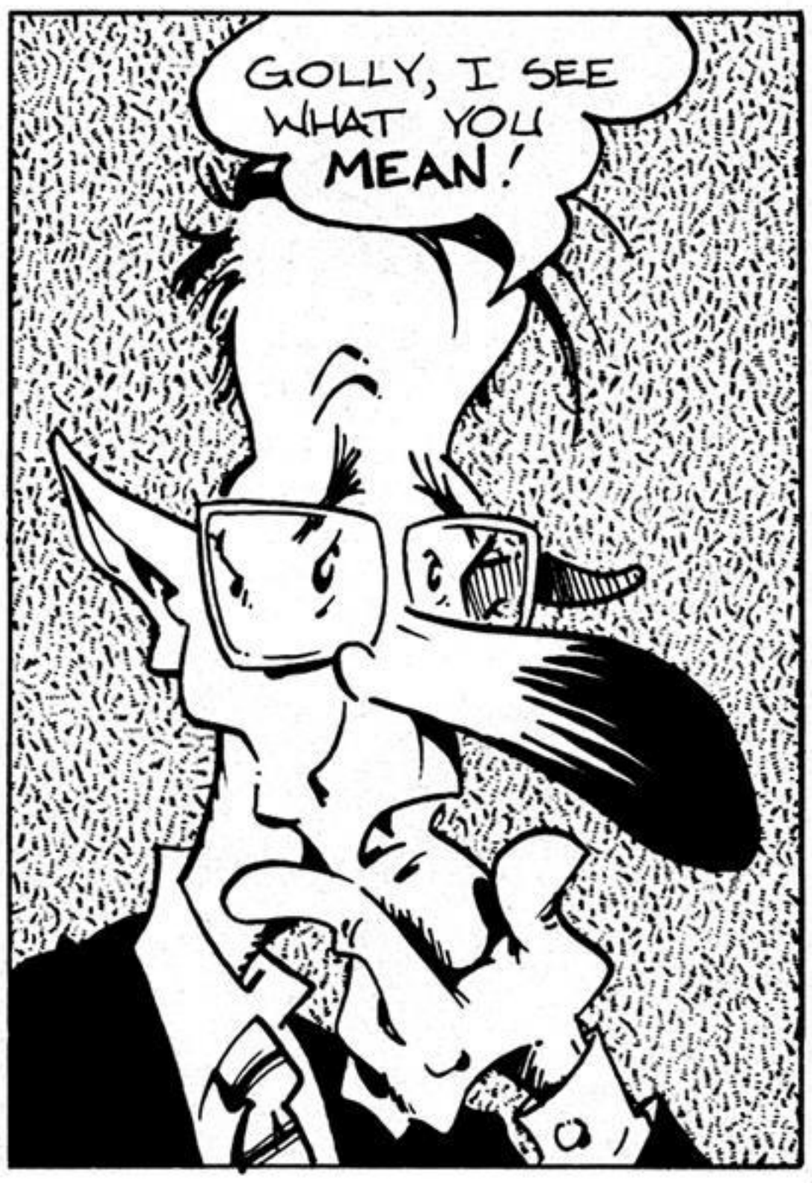
And as if boot camp weren't bad enough, the day soon arrived when they told us we were being sent into combat.

But the first assignment wasn't exactly combat; it was tough! I was stuck babysitting a USO tour...
... which consisted of a moldy old comedian, Bob Hop, and several Playbait Bunnies. Everything was running smoothly...
... until the night Bob went AWOL with Miss September.
Sarge wasn't thrilled, to say the least. I think he blamed me for giving Bob the idea.
LISTEN UP, YOU GOLDBRICK, TAKE A SQUAD AND DON'T COME BACK WITHOUT HIM! HE'S A PERSONAL FRIEND OF PRESIDENT TRIXON!
YESSIR, YESSIR!
BRUNO
So that's how I found myself in this situation now. As I said, lost, alone frightened, etc. But I push on. Why?
Because the last thing I need is to make enemies in the White House.

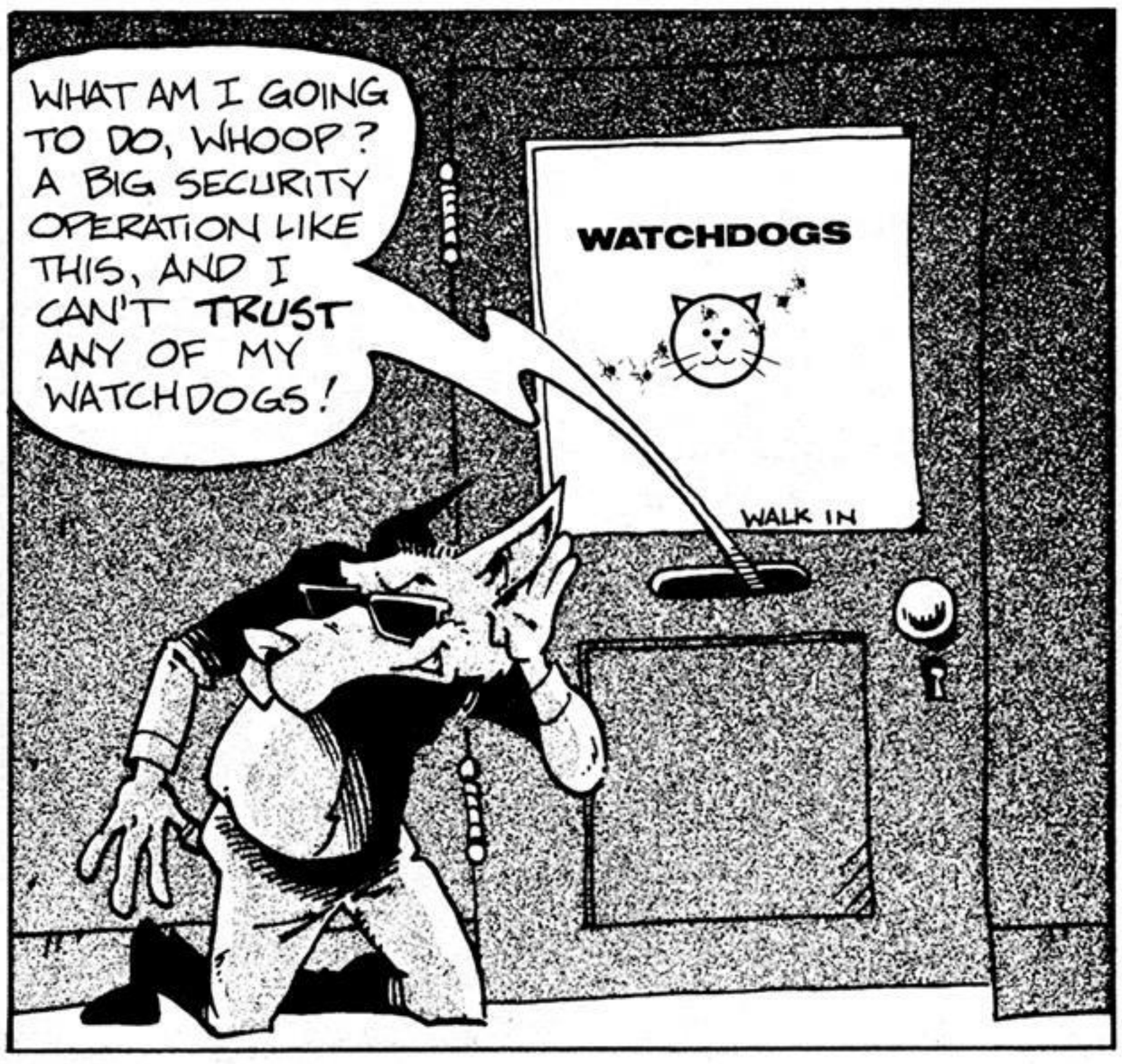
MEANWHILE, IN THE OVAL OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE, PLANS ARE BEING MADE THAT WILL HAVE A PROFOUND EFFECT ON THE BLUE BEAGLE'S FUTURE.

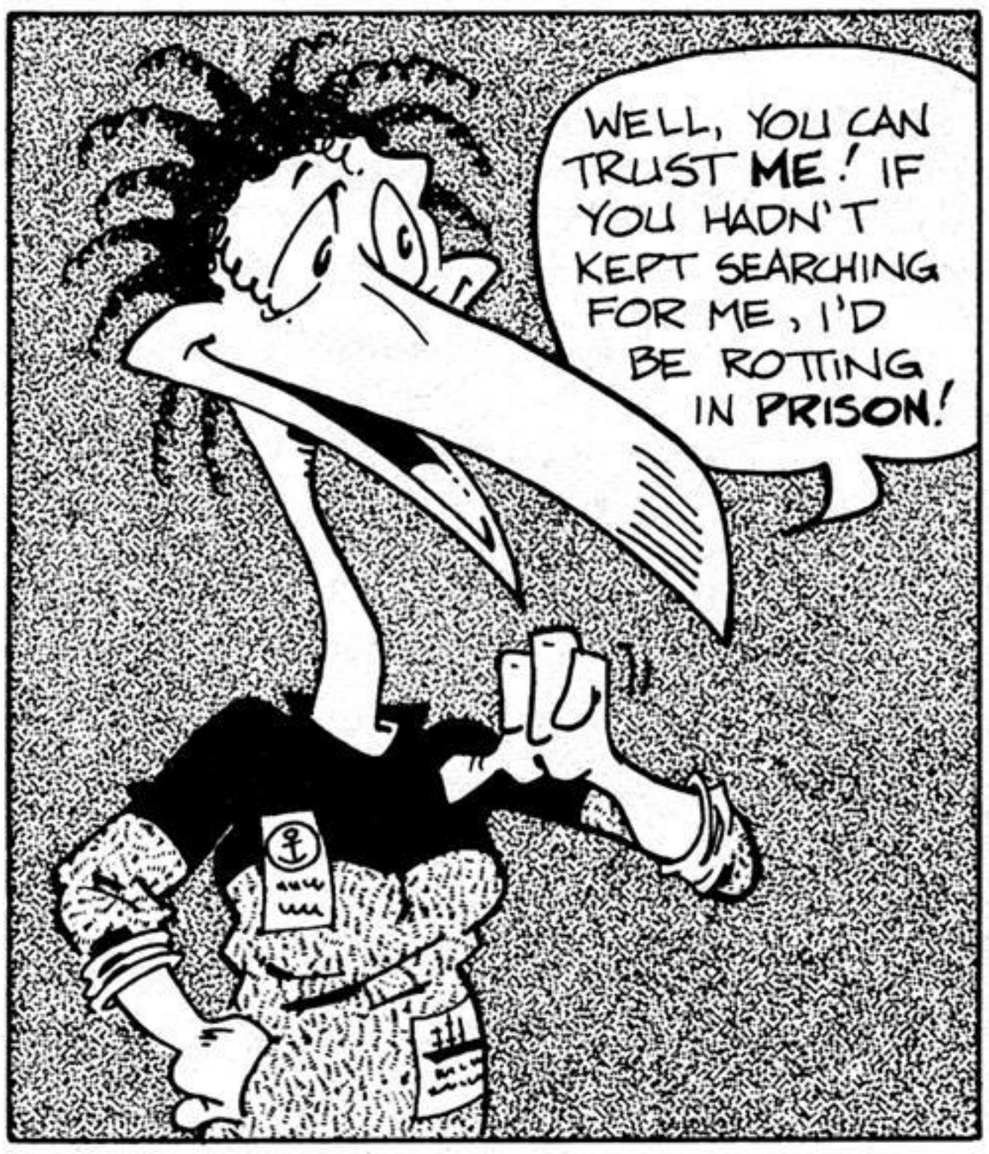
SEND FOR KASSIE CATNIP ON THE DOUBLE!

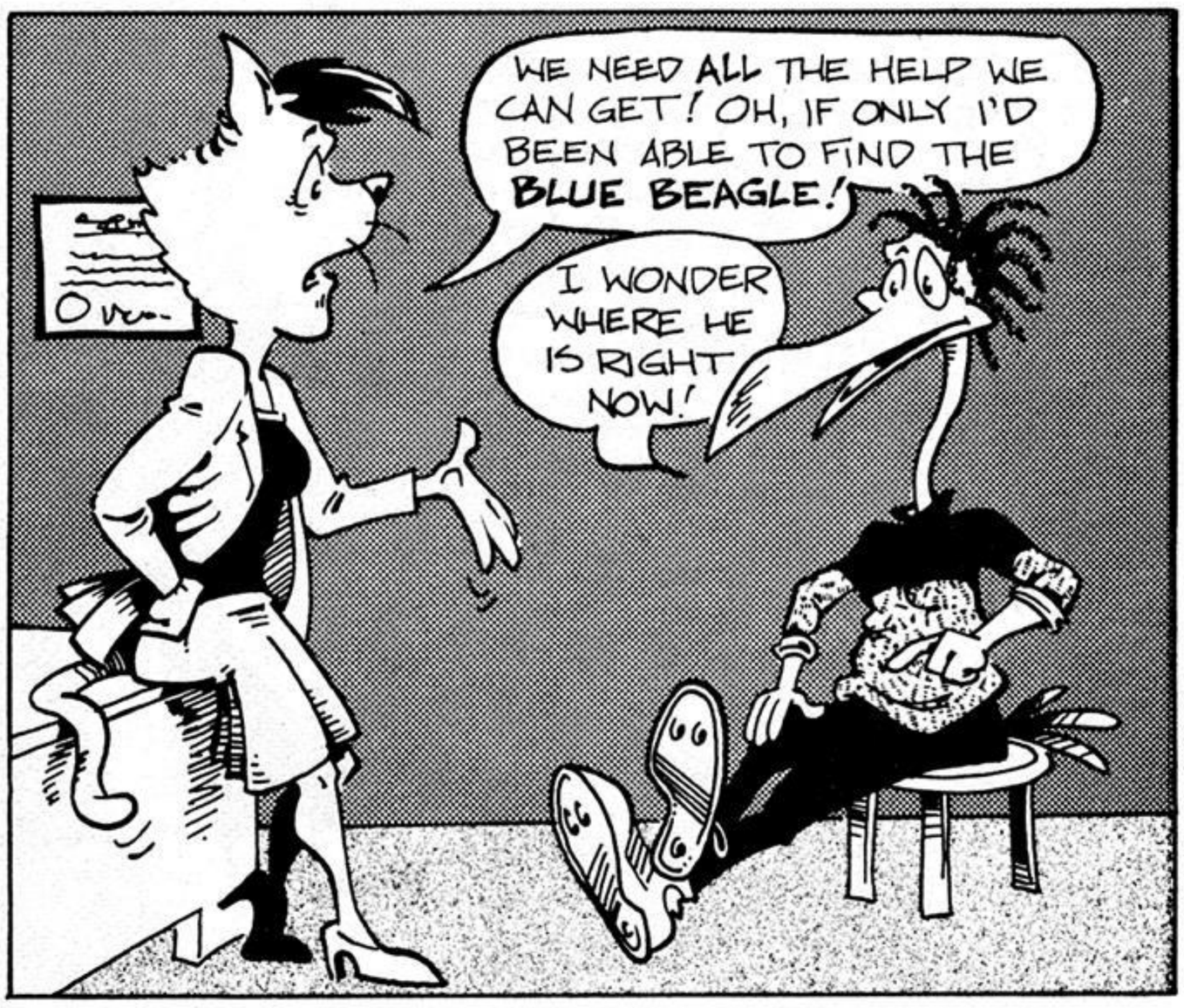
YES, MR. PRESIDENT!



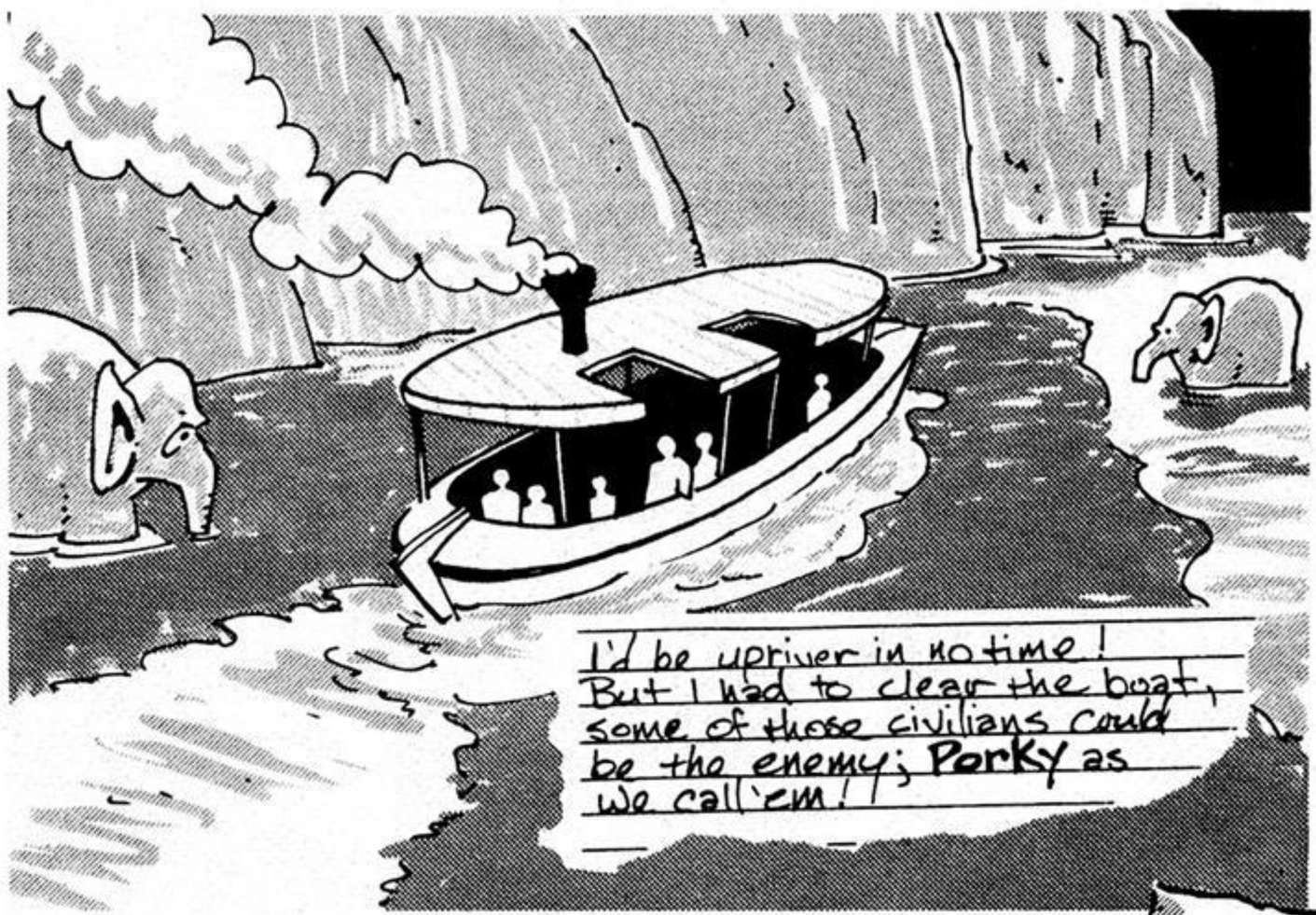
LOOK ON THE SUNNY SIDE, WHAT COULD POSSIBLY HAPPEN IN AN AMUSEMENT PARK?
YEAH!


WHAT AM I GOING TO DO, WHOOP? A BIG SECURITY OPERATION LIKE THIS, AND I CAN'T **TRUST** ANY OF MY WATCHDOGS!
WATCHDOGS
WALK IN


WELL, YOU CAN TRUST **ME**! IF YOU HADN'T KEPT SEARCHING FOR ME, I'D BE ROTTING IN **PRISON**!

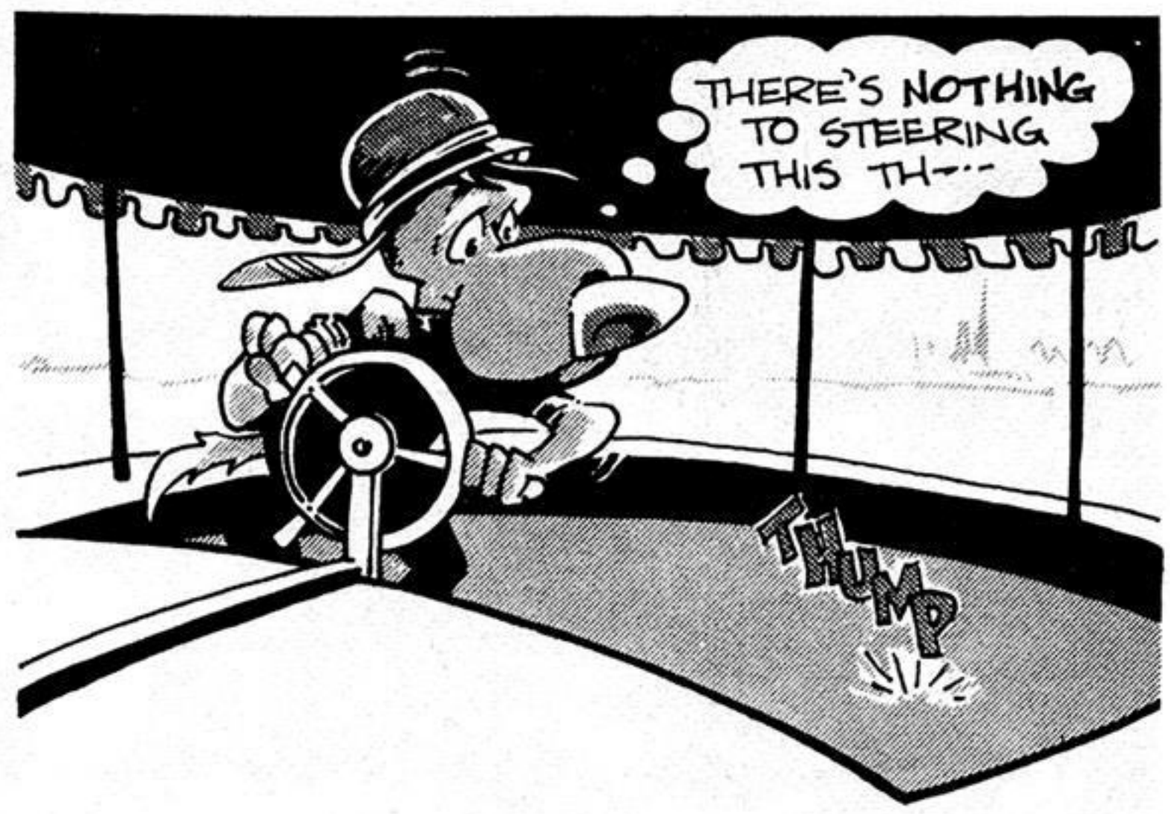

WE NEED **ALL** THE HELP WE CAN GET! OH, IF ONLY I'D BEEN ABLE TO FIND THE **BLUE BEAGLE**!
I WONDER WHERE HE IS RIGHT NOW!

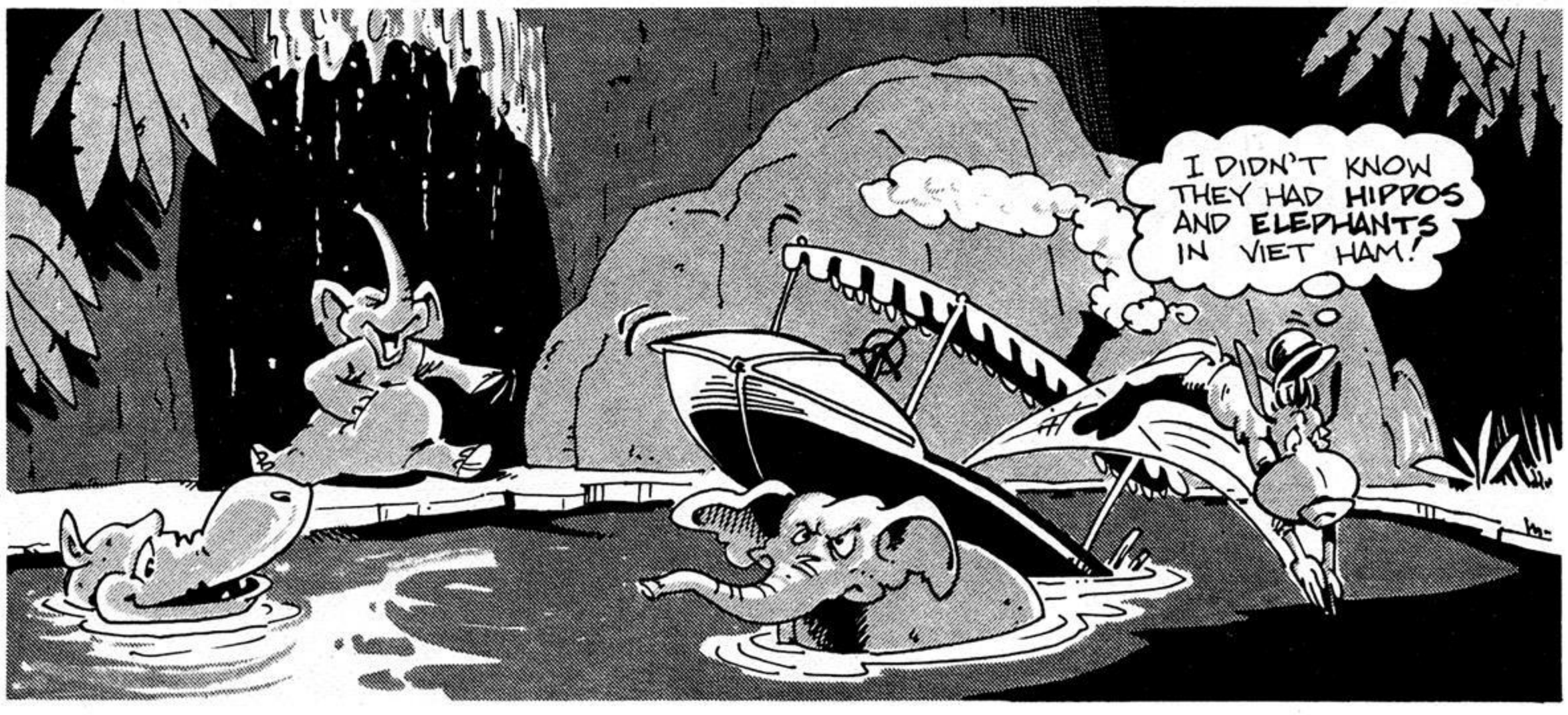
I was in deep shit! I had only the vagnest notion of where I was headed. I only knew I had to head up the Lai Zee River into the heart of Hambodia.
As I broke from cover, I spotted the perfect mode of transportation...


I'd be upriver in no time! But I had to clear the boat, some of those civilians could be the enemy; Porky as we call 'em!

ARRITE! EVERYBODY OFF NOW! I'M COMMANDEERING THIS VESSEL IN THE NAME OF THE USO!
?
?

DO AS HE SAYS, ALISON! HE MUST BE PART OF THE SHOW!
BUT HE'S ONLY GOT A BROOMSTICK!
WHAT ARE YA GONNA DO, FILL US FULLA SPLINTERS?


THERE'S NOTHING TO STEERING THIS TH---
THUMP


I DIDN'T KNOW THEY HAD HIPPOS AND ELEPHANTS IN VIET HAM!

I'd found the legendary Oinkor Watt, it's origins are shrouded in mystery. This was the suspected base for the enemy!! I guess that's affirmative!!

IS THERE ANY CHANCE THAT WE MIGHT BE ON THE SAME SIDE?

They beat and starved me until I couldn't even remember my own name.

Every morning I watched them execute prisoners until the day they came for me!!

FAREWELL, IMPERIALIST DOG!

CLICK

WAIT, STOP!

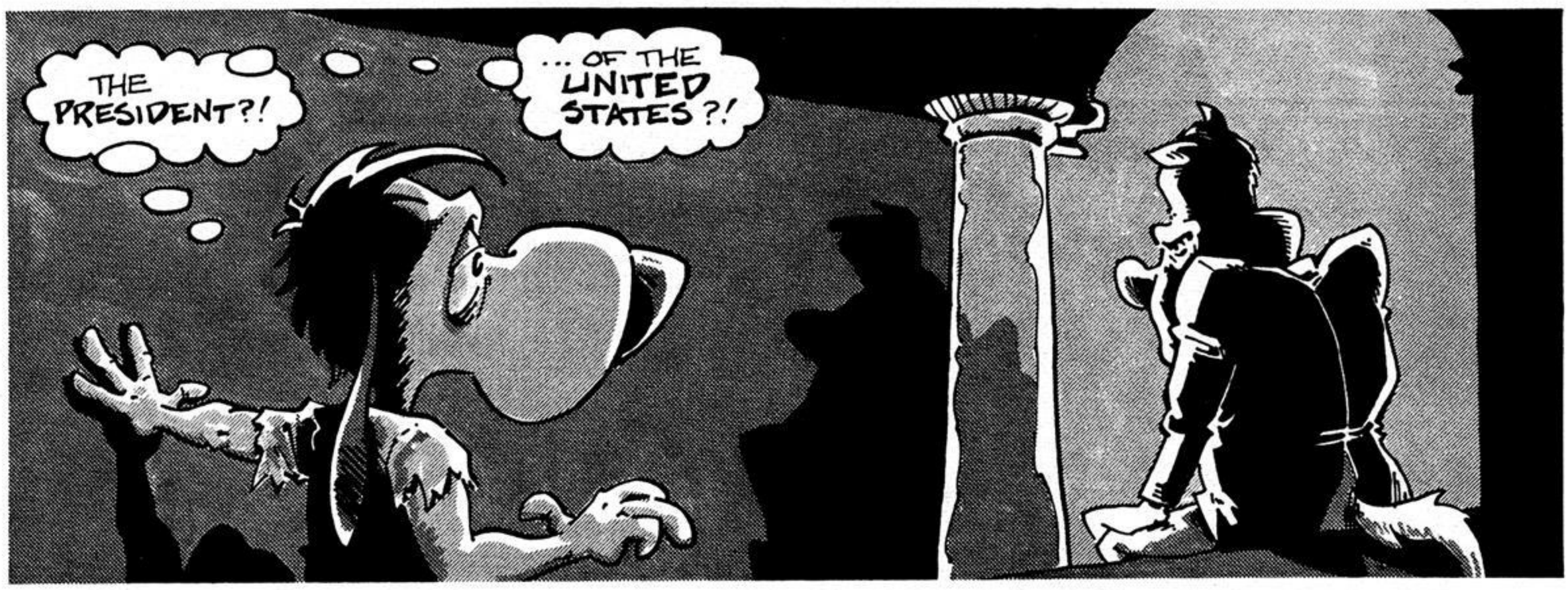
HE'S **NOT** TO BE KILLED! HE HAS AN AUDIENCE IN THE TEMPLE!

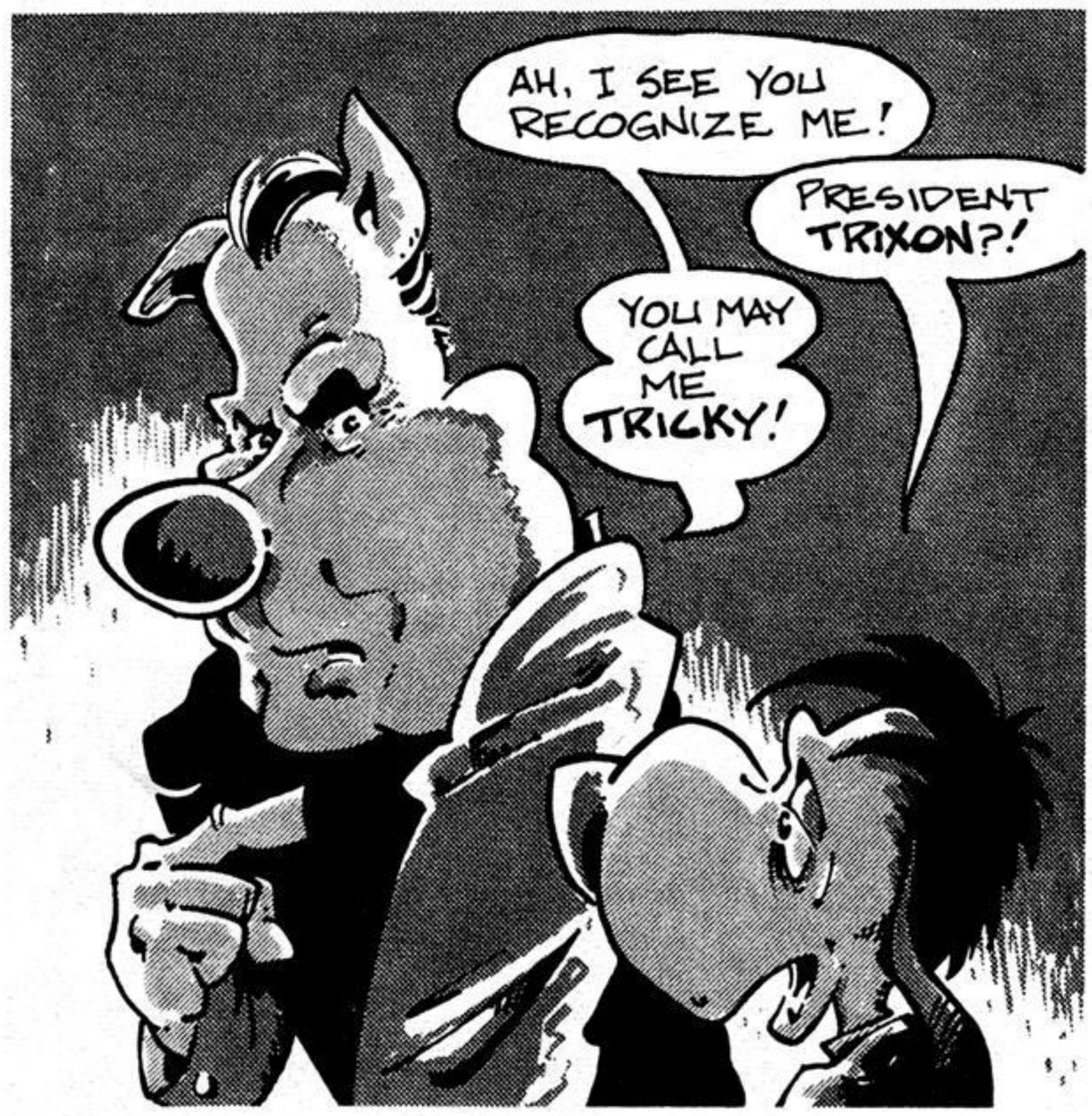
?

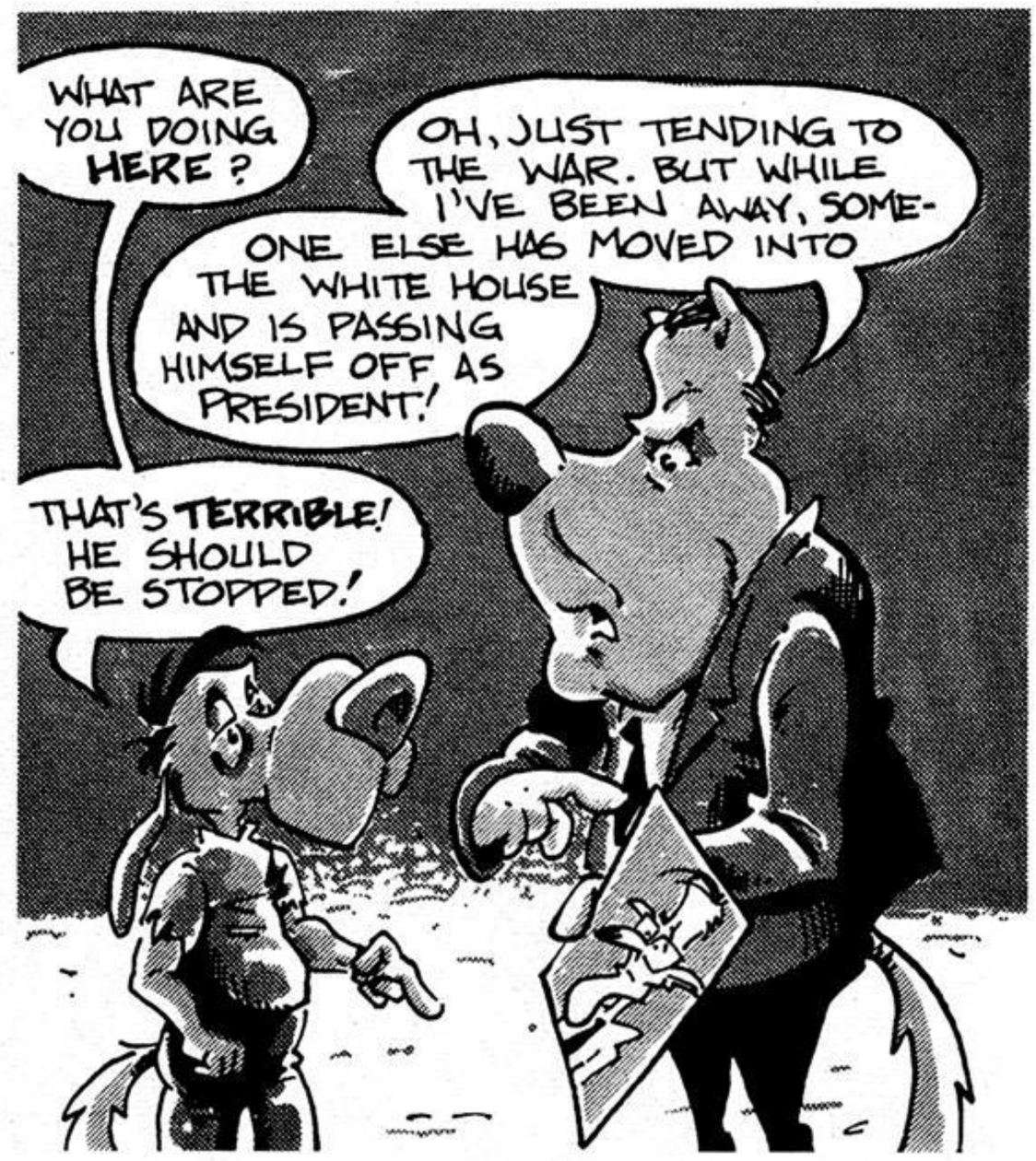
BOY, TALK ABOUT MISTAKES! THAT WAS **CLOSE**!! HURRY UP, **HE**'S WAITING IN THE TEMPLE FOR YOU!

WHO?

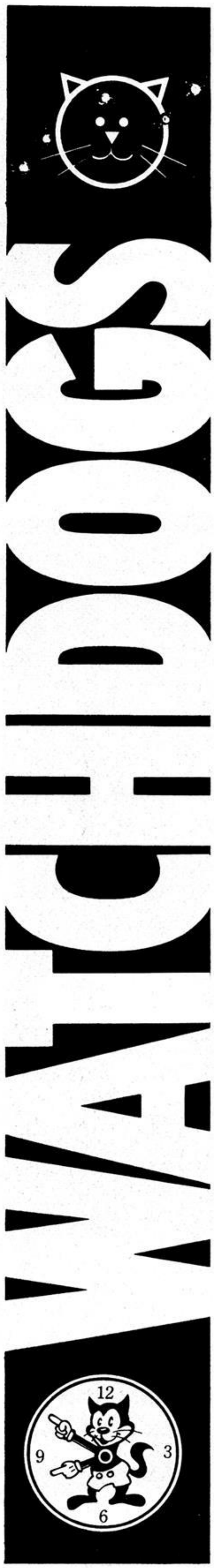
THE **PRESIDENT**, SILLY!


THE PRESIDENT?!
... OF THE UNITED STATES?!


AH, I SEE YOU RECOGNIZE ME!
PRESIDENT TRIXON?!
YOU MAY CALL ME TRICKY!


WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
OH, JUST TENDING TO THE WAR. BUT WHILE I'VE BEEN AWAY, SOMEONE ELSE HAS MOVED INTO THE WHITE HOUSE AND IS PASSING HIMSELF OFF AS PRESIDENT!
THAT'S TERRIBLE! HE SHOULD BE STOPPED!

EXACTLY, AND THAT IS WHERE YOU CAN HELP ME! YOU'D LIKE TO SEE THAT IMPOSTOR THROWN OUT, SO I CAN BE PRESIDENT AGAIN, WOULDN'T YOU?!
THAT'S A GOOD SOLDIER!
YEAH, SURE!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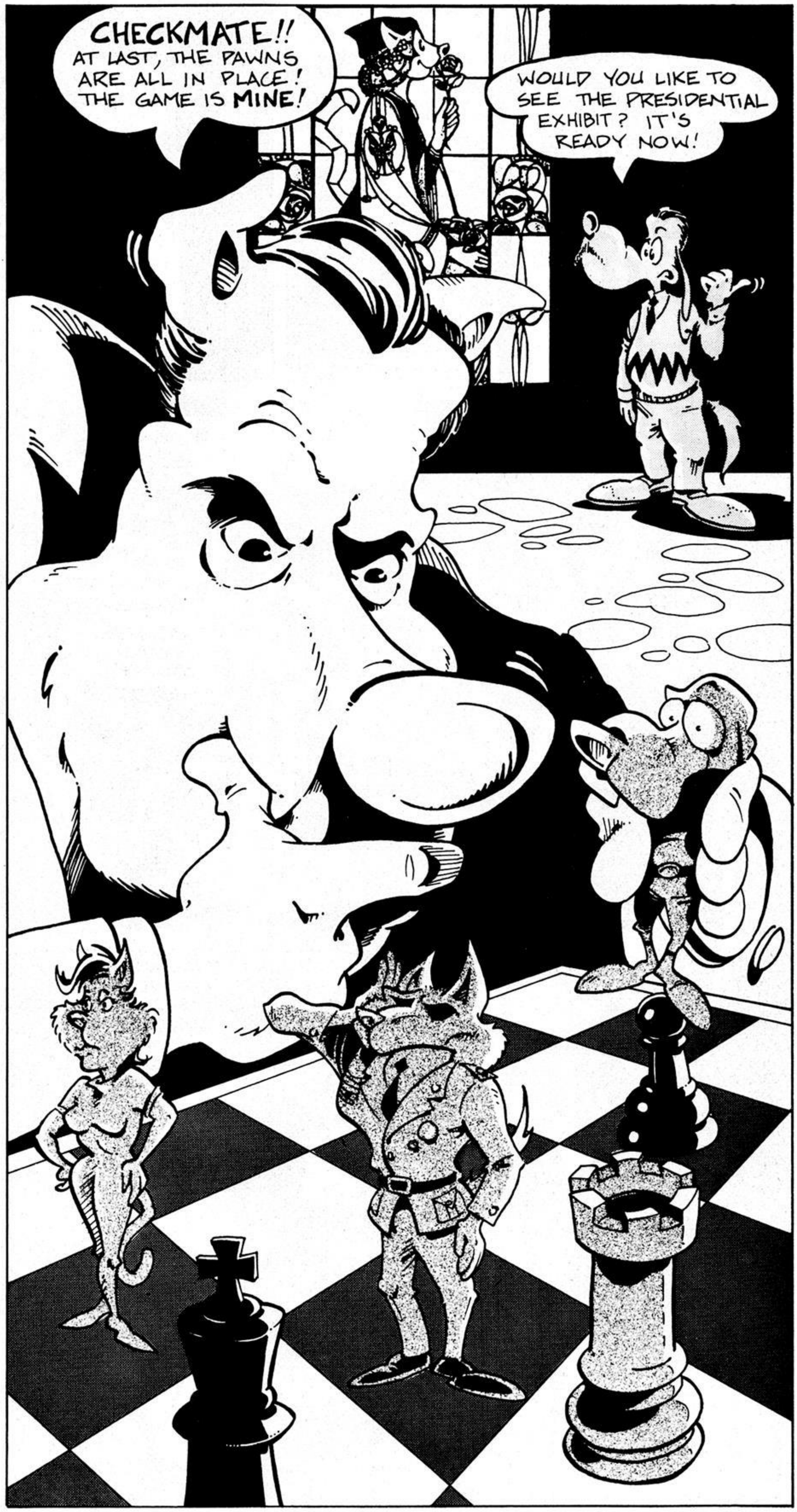
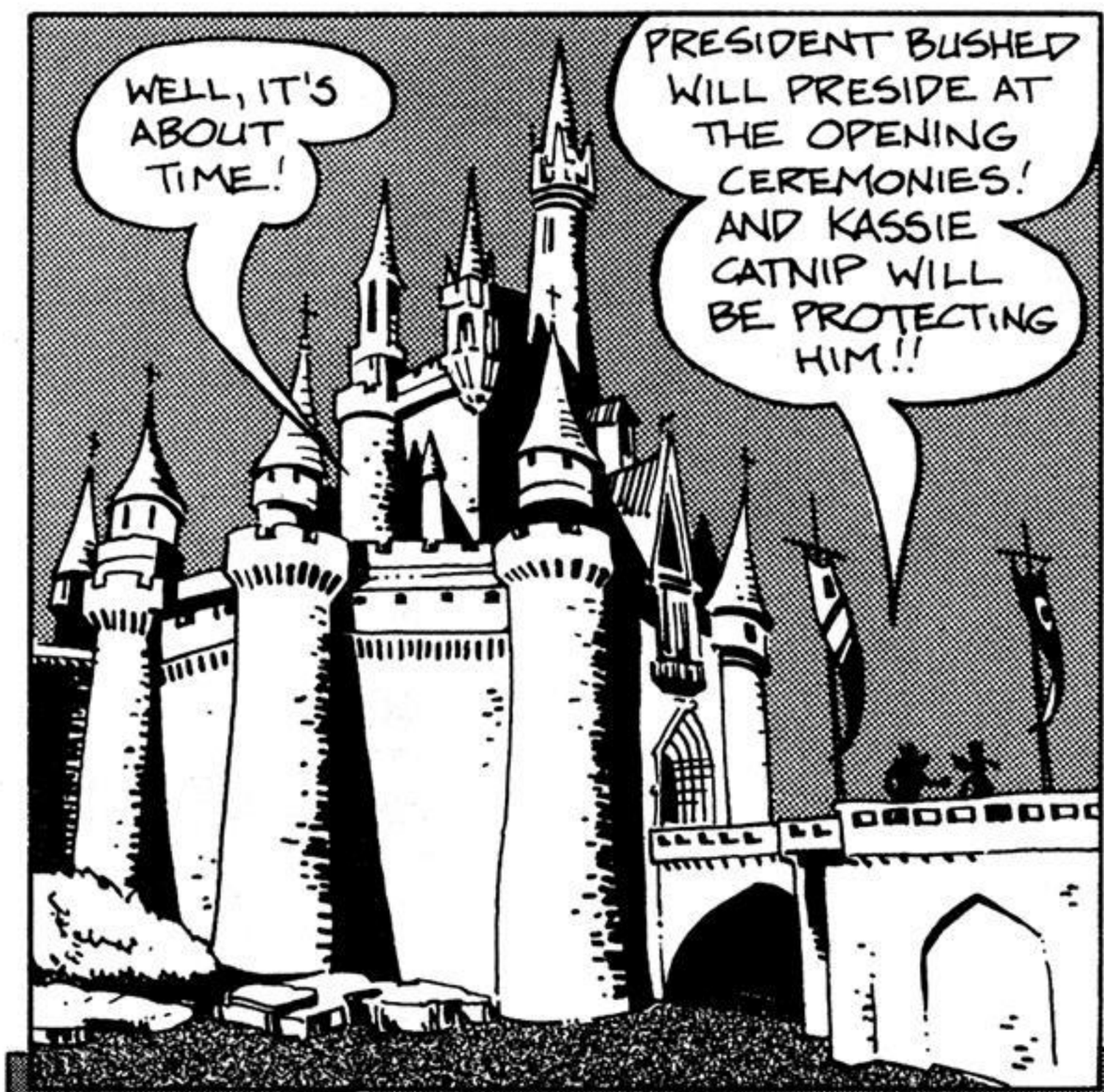

CHECKMATE!! AT LAST, THE PAWNS ARE ALL IN PLACE! THE GAME IS MINE!
WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE THE PRESIDENTIAL EXHIBIT? IT'S READY NOW!

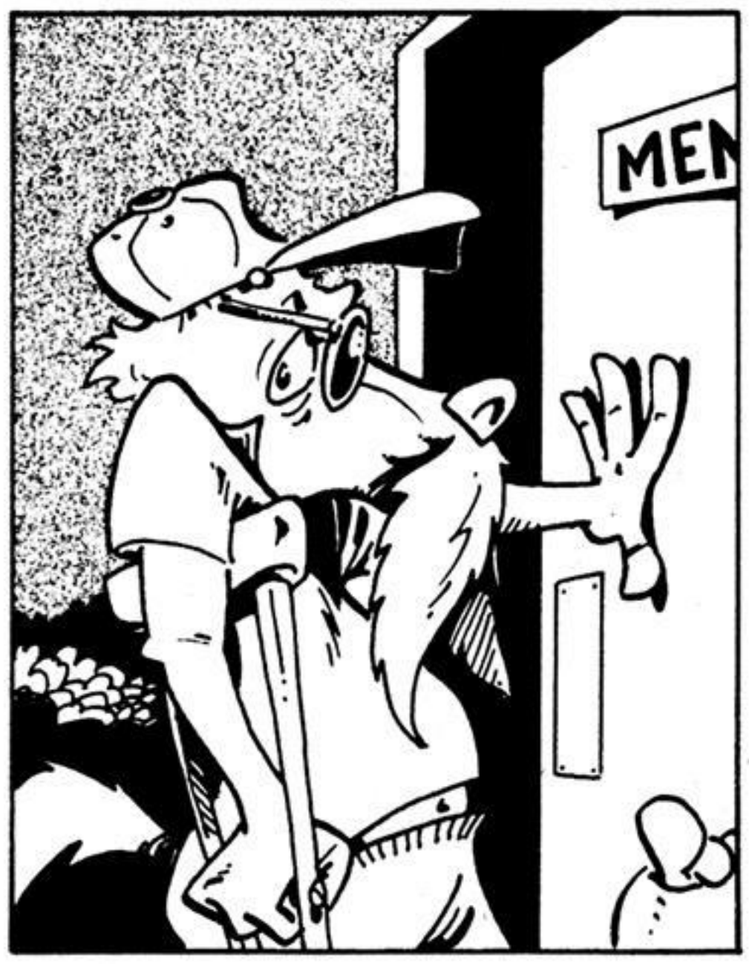


WHO WATCHES THE DOGS?

WATCHDOGS!

by TIM FULLER

"... WE CAN'T JEOPARDIZE THE PRESIDENT'S VISIT..."


"... BY LETTING JUST ANYONE IN HERE. ESPECIALLY..."
MEN

"... WITH COLLIE NORTH ON THE LOOSE, HE'D LOVE TO STOP US!"

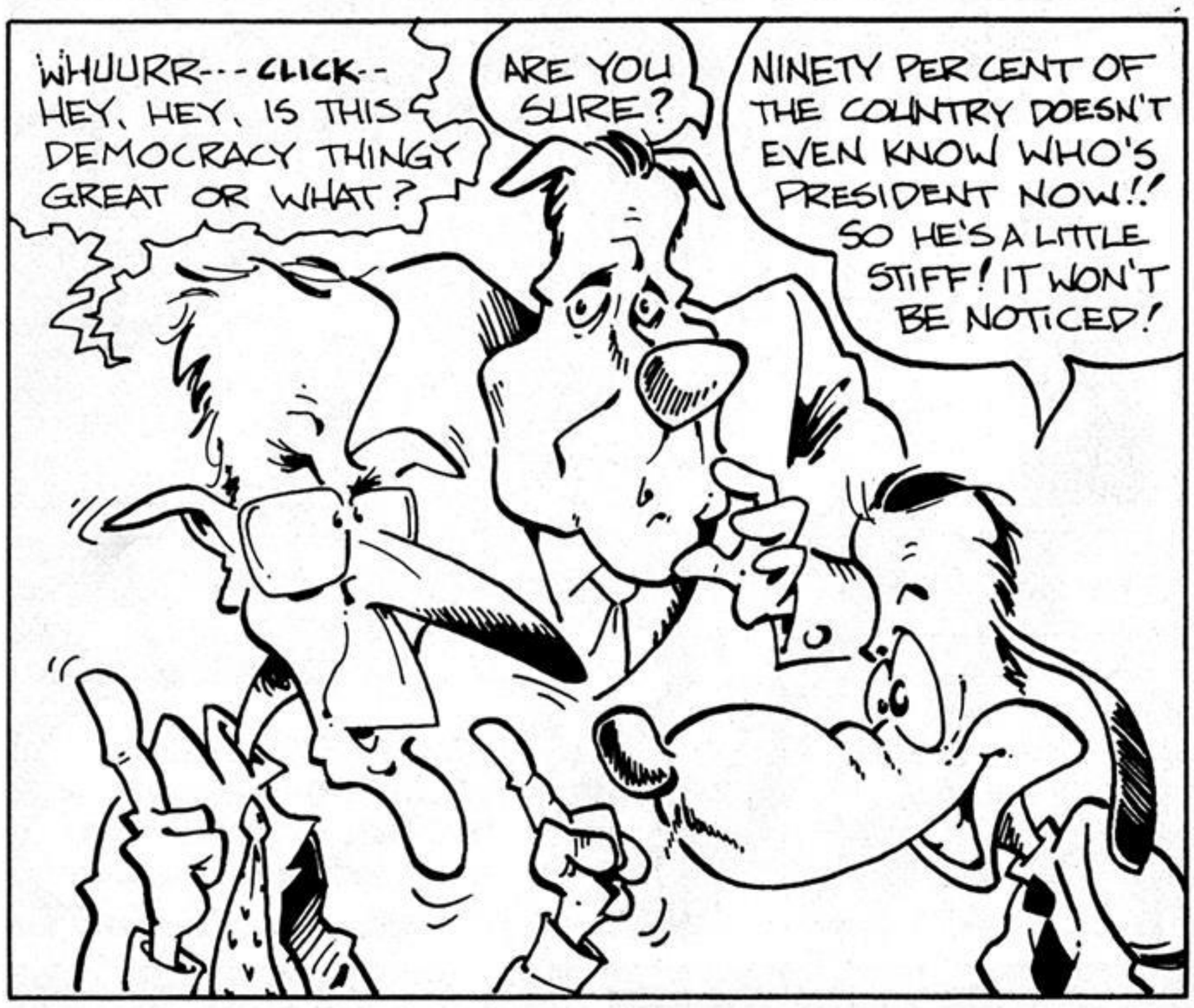
HE WAS A GOOD AGENT. FIRING HIM WAS NOT ONE OF YOUR BETTER IDEAS!

I THOUGHT HE'D BE IN CUSTODY BY NOW!!
SEAL OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
WELL, LET'S SEE THIS FABULOUS **HALL OF PRESIDENTS** THAT YOU KEEP BRAGGING ABOUT!

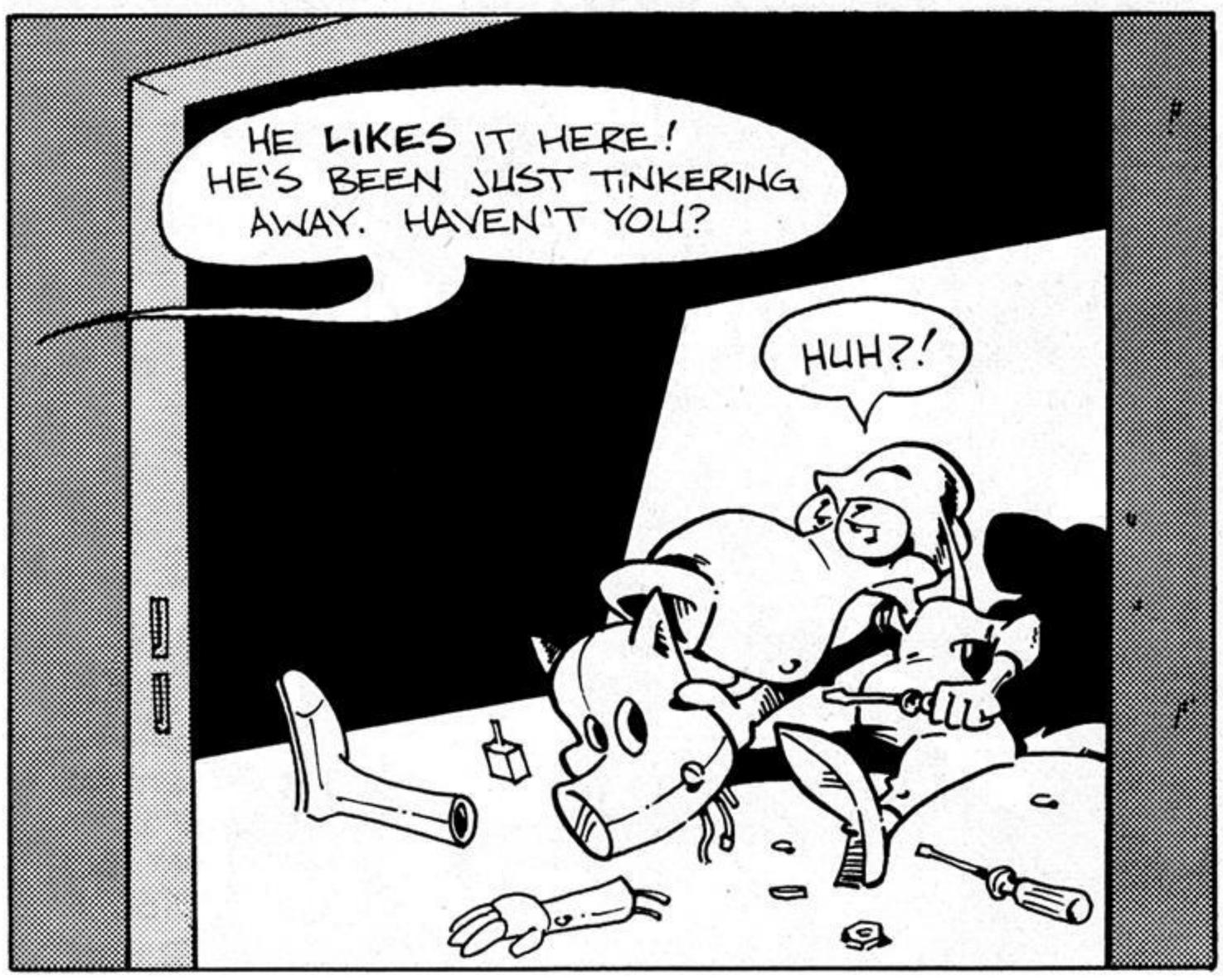
GOOD LORD! IT'S **GREAT**! THEY'RE SO REAL!
NOT BAD, IF I DO SAY SO MYSELF!

BUT MY STAFF OF IMAGINATORS HAVE OUTDONE THEMSELVES ON THIS LATEST ROBOT!
VOILÀ!!
THIS IS THE ONLY ONE THAT COUNTS!

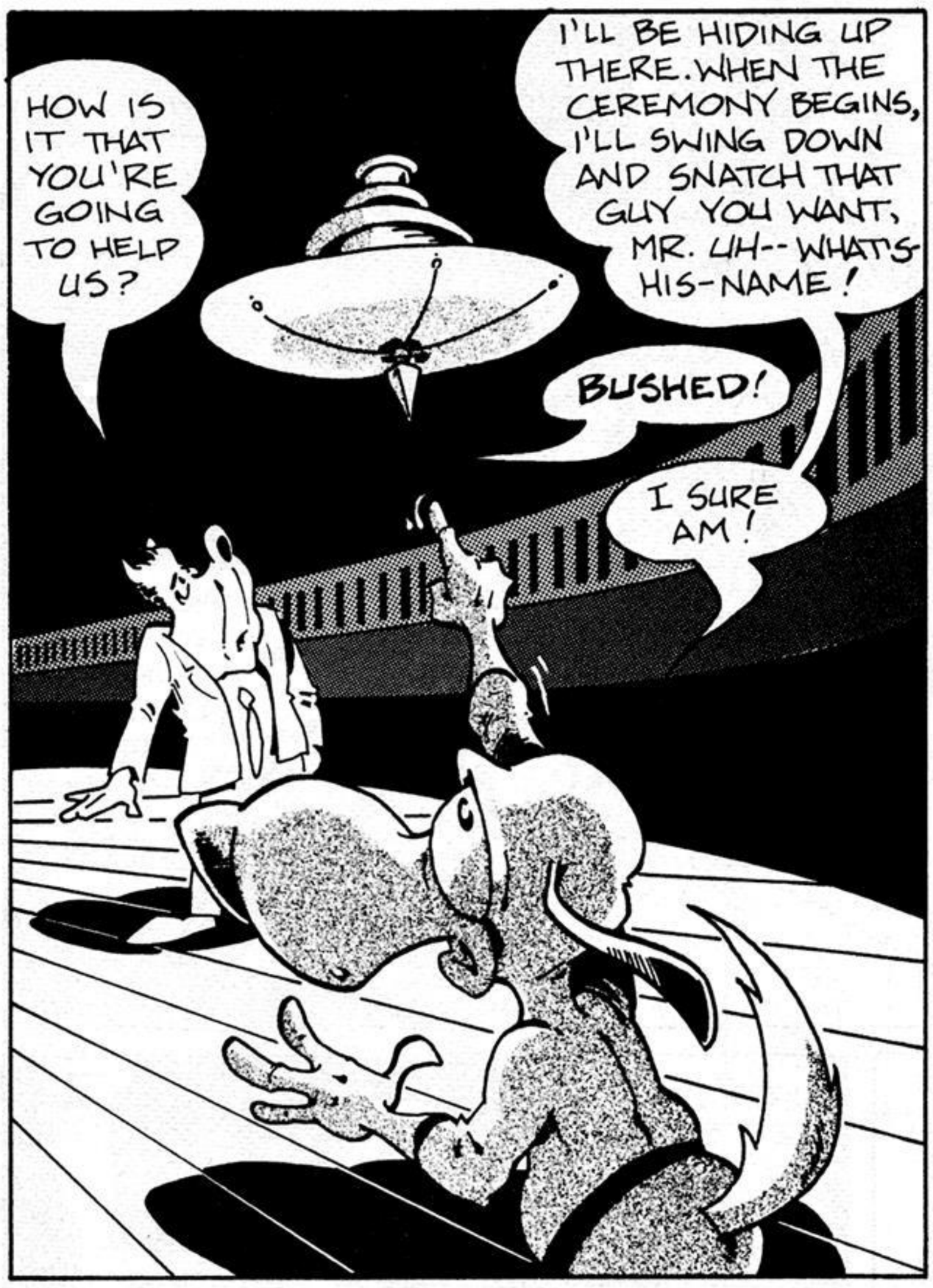
HE LOOKS LIKE A WIMP! THE LIKENESS IS AMAZING!
YES, SUBSTITUTE HIM FOR THE REAL ONE AND THE PRESIDENCY IS WITHIN OUR CONTROL... OR I SHOULD SAY
REMOTE CONTROL!


WHUURR--- CLICK-- HEY, HEY, IS THIS DEMOCRACY THINGY GREAT OR WHAT?
ARE YOU SURE?
NINETY PER CENT OF THE COUNTRY DOESN'T EVEN KNOW WHO'S PRESIDENT NOW!! SO HE'S A LITTLE STIFF! IT WON'T BE NOTICED!

BUT MUCH OF THIS PLAN HINGES ON THE BLUE BEAGLE!
WHERE IS HE?
WE'VE KEPT HIM AMUSED IN THE ROBOT LABS!


HE LIKES IT HERE! HE'S BEEN JUST TINKERING AWAY. HAVEN'T YOU?
HUH?!

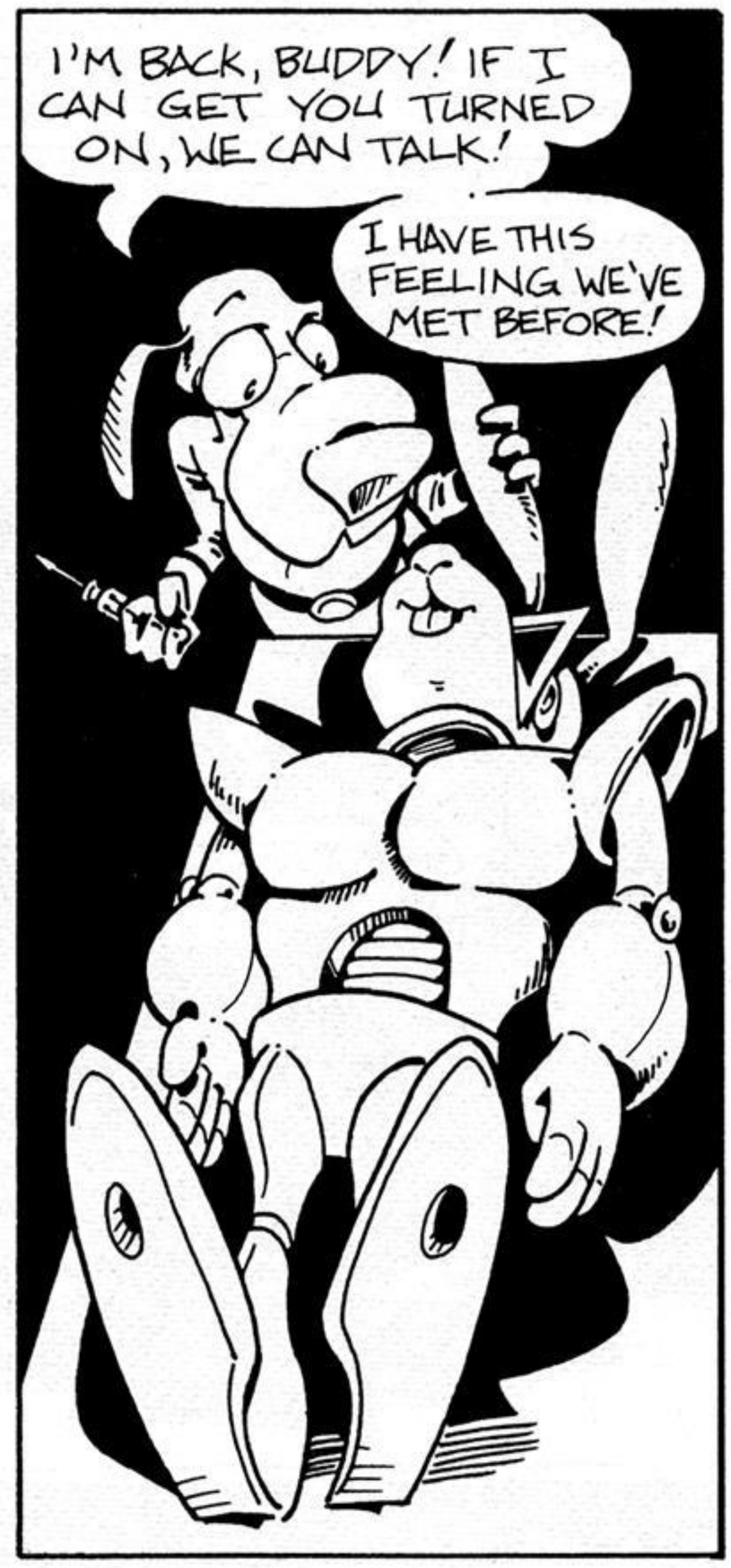
I JUST WANTED SOMEONE TO TALK TO. IT'S LONELY!!
WELL, YOU CAN TALK TO US NOW.


HOW IS IT THAT YOU'RE GOING TO HELP US?
I'LL BE HIDING UP THERE. WHEN THE CEREMONY BEGINS, I'LL SWING DOWN AND SNATCH THAT GUY YOU WANT, MR. UH-- WHAT'S HIS-NAME!
BUSHED!
I SURE AM!

THEN I'LL WHISK HIM OFF, INTO THE TUNNELS UNDER THIS BUILDING, AND I'LL BE A HERO!!
THAT'S RIGHT, YOU WILL!! NOW LET'S GET YOU BACK TO THE ROBOT ROOMS!

OH, GOOD! I WAS WORKING ON A ROBOT THAT I LIKE; HE'S MY FRIEND!
YOU ENJOY YOURSELF, 'TIL WE NEED YOU!

HE'S RATHER SIMPLE!
HE JUST GETS A LITTLE EXCITED IF YOU DON'T KNOW HOW TO HANDLE HIM. BUT HE'S GOT IT ALL DOWN! NOTHING CAN GO WRONG!
I GUESS NOT!


I'M BACK, BUDDY! IF I CAN GET YOU TURNED ON, WE CAN TALK!
I HAVE THIS FEELING WE'VE MET BEFORE!

THE **BIG DAY** FINALLY ARRIVES AND IS KICKED OFF WITH A PARADE IN FRONT OF A CAREFULLY SELECTED CROWD.

WELCOME PRESIDENT BUSHED

KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN FOR ANYTHING SUSPICIOUS, WHOOP. WITH THIS SMALL A TURNOUT THAT SHOULDN'T BE TOO HARD!

GEE, GEORGIE, WILL YOU BUY ME A **T-SHIRT**, HUH? PLEASE?

MAYBE LATER, DANNY. IF YOU'RE GOOD!

THEY LOOK LIKE A BUNCH OF OLD FARTS!

I ALWAYS LIKE TO START OUT WITH A LITTLE JOKE, BUT DANNY WANTED TO GO RIDE THE FLYING HIPPOS. I'M REALLY EXCITED TO BE HERE TODAY TO DEDICATE THIS HALL OF PRESIDENTS (OF WHICH I AM ONE). BUT I DIGRESS; DINGY WORLD, TO ME, REPRESENTS AMERICUR'S FINEST ACHIEVEMENT. THINK HOW WONDERFUL IT WOULD BE IF THE WORLD WERE RUN LIKE THIS PARK. LIFE WOULD BE PLEASANT, CHEERFUL AND SO CLEAN. EVERYTHING WOULD BE GRAND, EXCEPT FOR THE LINES.

WOW! I'VE GOT THE BEST VIEW IN THE WHOLE PLACE...

...EXCEPT FOR THAT GUY OVER THERE WITH THE **GUN**. FUNNY, I CAN'T REMEMBER WHO HE IS, BUT...

...JUST LOOKING AT HIM IS MAKING ME **ANGRY**! I WANT TO **BEAT** THE **POO** OUTTA HIM!

COME ON, DINGY, SHOW YOURSELF. ONE CLEAR SHOT, THAT'S ALL I WANT!!

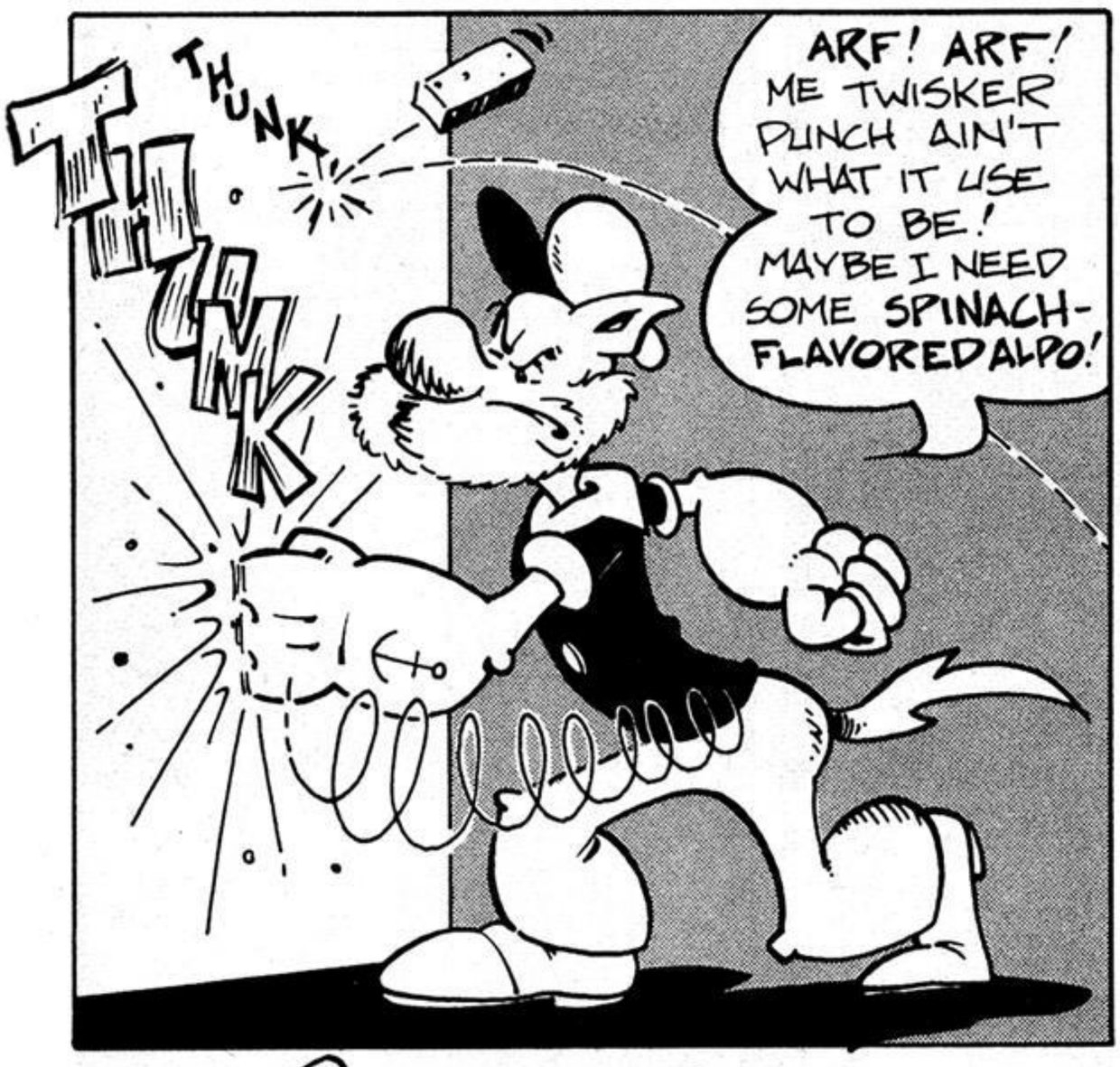
IT'S VERY RUDE TO SHOOT THE GUY I'M TRYING TO KIDNAP!!
BLAM
YOW! MAD DOG! MAD DOG!!!

ZING
UH, WAS IT SOMETHING I SAID?
OH NO! NOT AGAIN!
TRICKY! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
TRYING TO GET YOU OUT OF THE LINE OF FIRE, YOU OLD FOOL! FOLLOW ME!

I SHOULD WARN YOU, THERE'S A LARGE, ANGRY ROBOT BEHIND YOU!
I'VE HEARD THAT ONE BEFORE!

I TOLD YOU SO!
NO ONE PUTS HOLES IN MY FRIEND! HE REASSEMBLED ME TO BE HIS BUDDY!
EERK!!!
HOLD IT! SAVE SOMETHING TO PUT ON TRIAL! I'LL TAKE HIM FROM HERE!

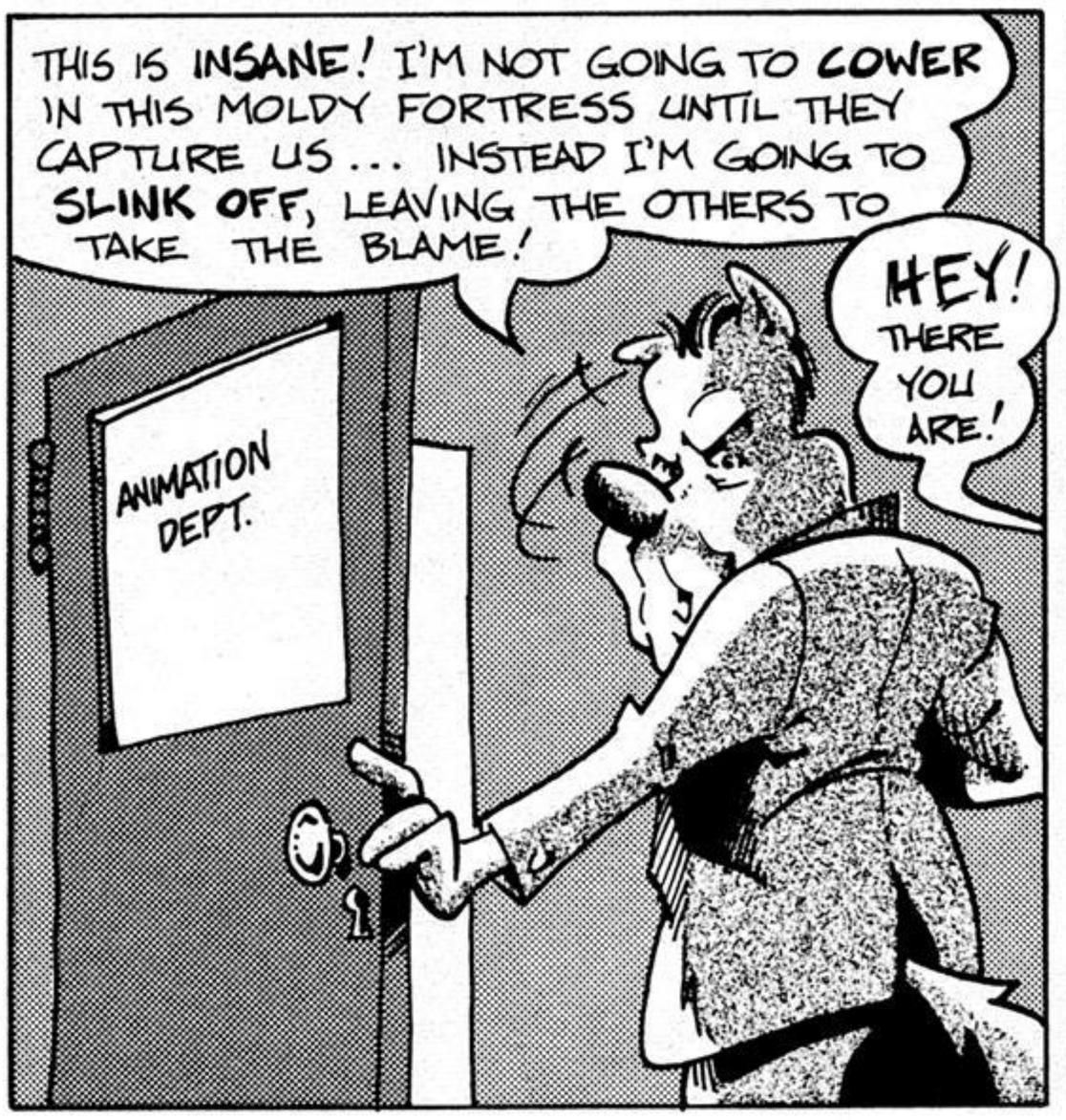
HEY, WAIT! THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO BE MY JOB! SOMEBODY IS GOING TO BE PISSED!
CASTLE →
← LOG FLUME
← GIFT SHOPS
IS THIS ALL PART OF THE TOUR?
LORD! THEY'LL GET US FOR SURE IN HERE!
NONSENSE! THIS CASTLE IS THE MOST SECURE SPOT IN THE PARK!
THE DEFENSE SYSTEM IS STATE-OF-THE-ART! IT WOULD TAKE AN ARMY TO GET IN HERE!
AVAST, YA BUNCHA OL' HAS-BEENS, WE'S HAD ALLS WE CAN STANDS AN' WE AIN'T GONNA STAN' NO MORE!
STORM THE CASKILL YA SWABS!!


THUNK
THUNK
ARF! ARF! ME TWISKER PUNCH AIN'T WHAT IT USE TO BE! MAYBE I NEED SOME SPINACH-FLAVORED ALPO!

ONE SIDE, OL' TIMER! I'VE GOT A LOCKSMITH!
OOOH! HE'S A BIG 'UN!

BLOWING HOLES IN THINGS IS MY SPECIALITY!

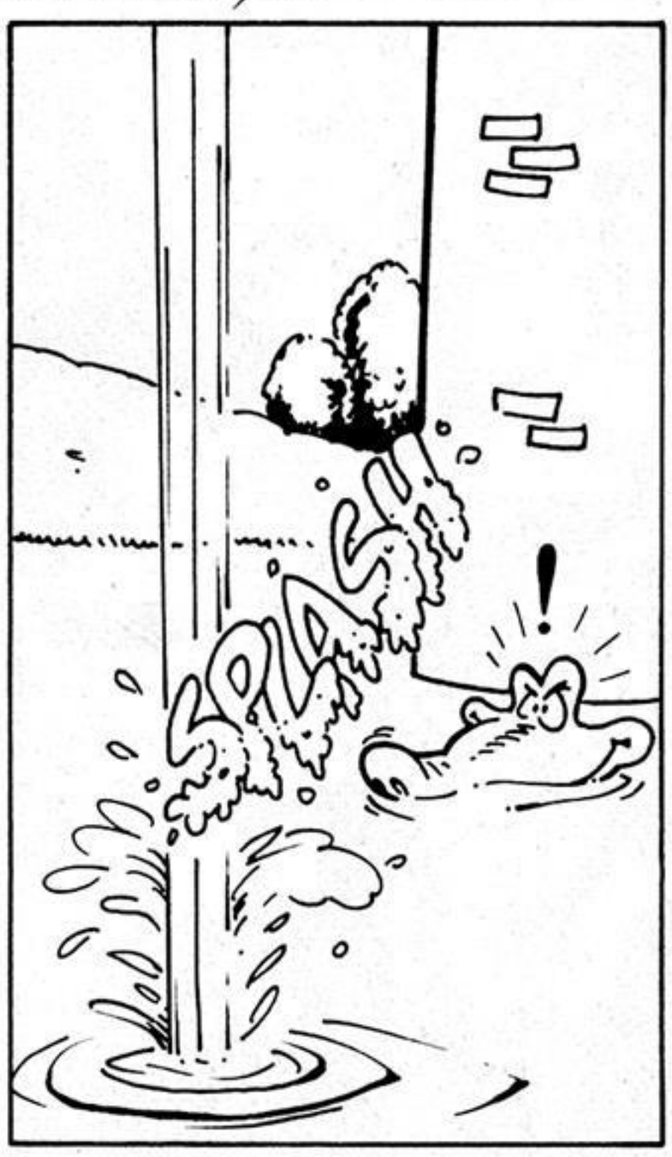
AN' YA DOES IT ALL RIKE!
AFFER YOU, MISSY!
TAKE IT EASY, THE BLUE BEAGLE IS IN THERE SOMEWHERE!
HOPEFULLY ON OUR SIDE!

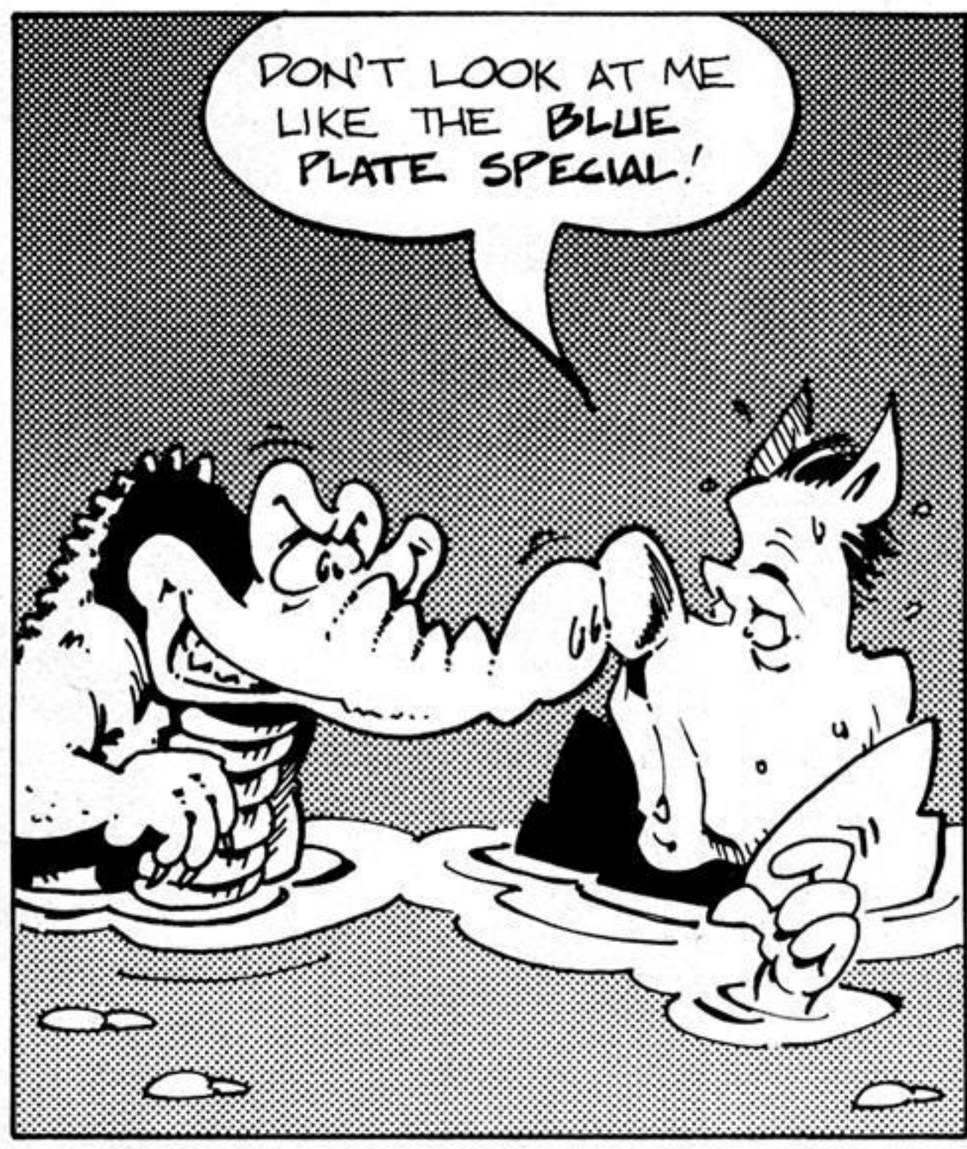

THIS IS INSANE! I'M NOT GOING TO COWER IN THIS MOLDY FORTRESS UNTIL THEY CAPTURE US... INSTEAD I'M GOING TO SLINK OFF, LEAVING THE OTHERS TO TAKE THE BLAME!
HEY! THERE YOU ARE!
ANIMATION DEPT.

I'VE GOT A SQUEEZE BOTTLE, AND I KNOW HOW TO USE IT! SO BACK OFF OR YOU'RE GOING TO DYE!
YUCK! WHATTA MESS!

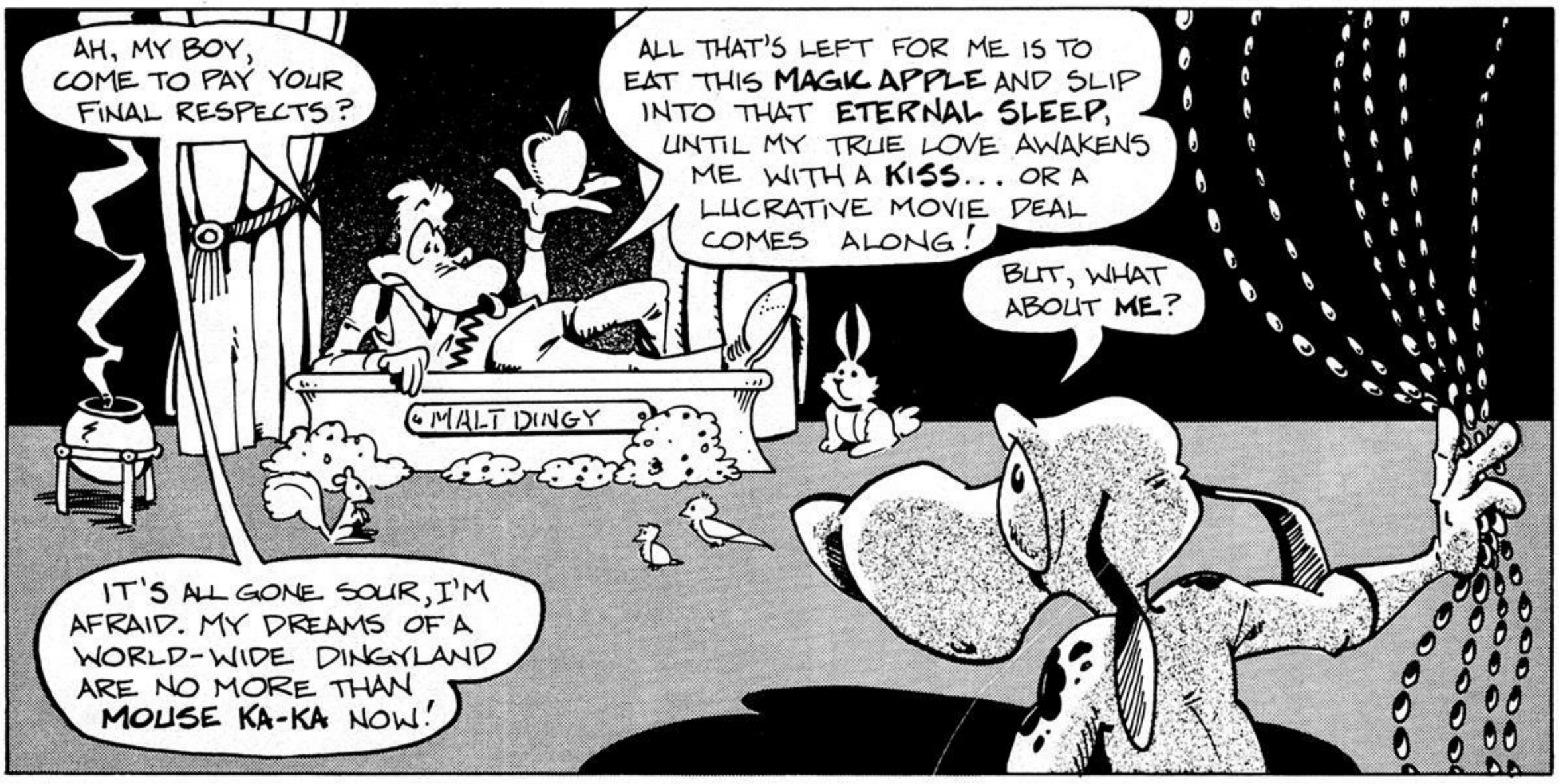
YOU UP THERE, SURRENDER, WHILE YOU STILL CAN!
MAYBE I CAN STILL PULL MY FAT OUTTA THE FIRE; BEG FOR A PRESIDENTIAL PARDON (AFTER ALL, I WAS PRESIDENT). I COULD WRITE A BESTSELLER, GO ON TALK SHOWS...
STOP!! STOP OR I'LL HAVE TO YELL STOP AGAIN!

...THAT IS, UNLESS THE MOAT ISN'T AS DEEP AS IT LOOKS!

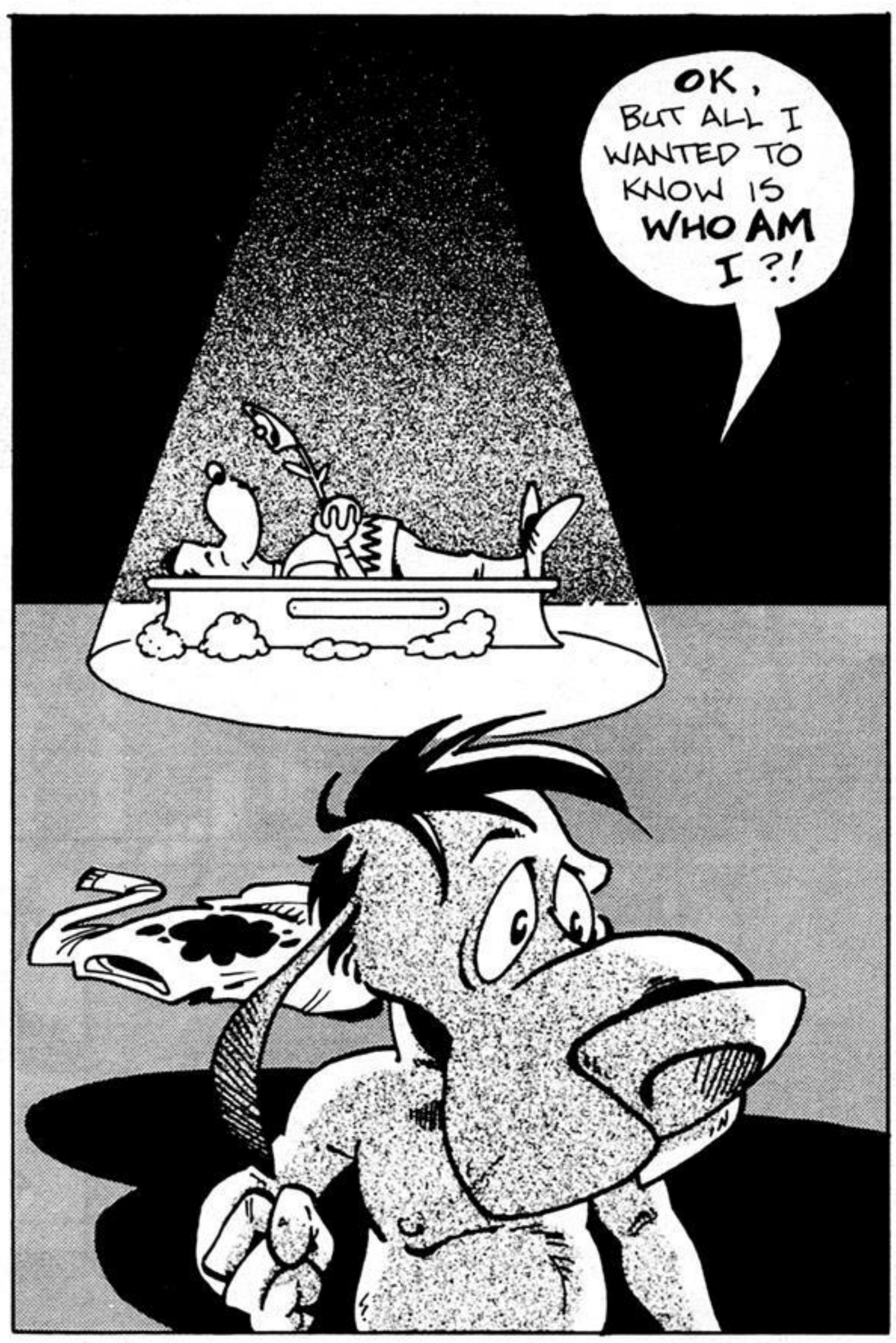


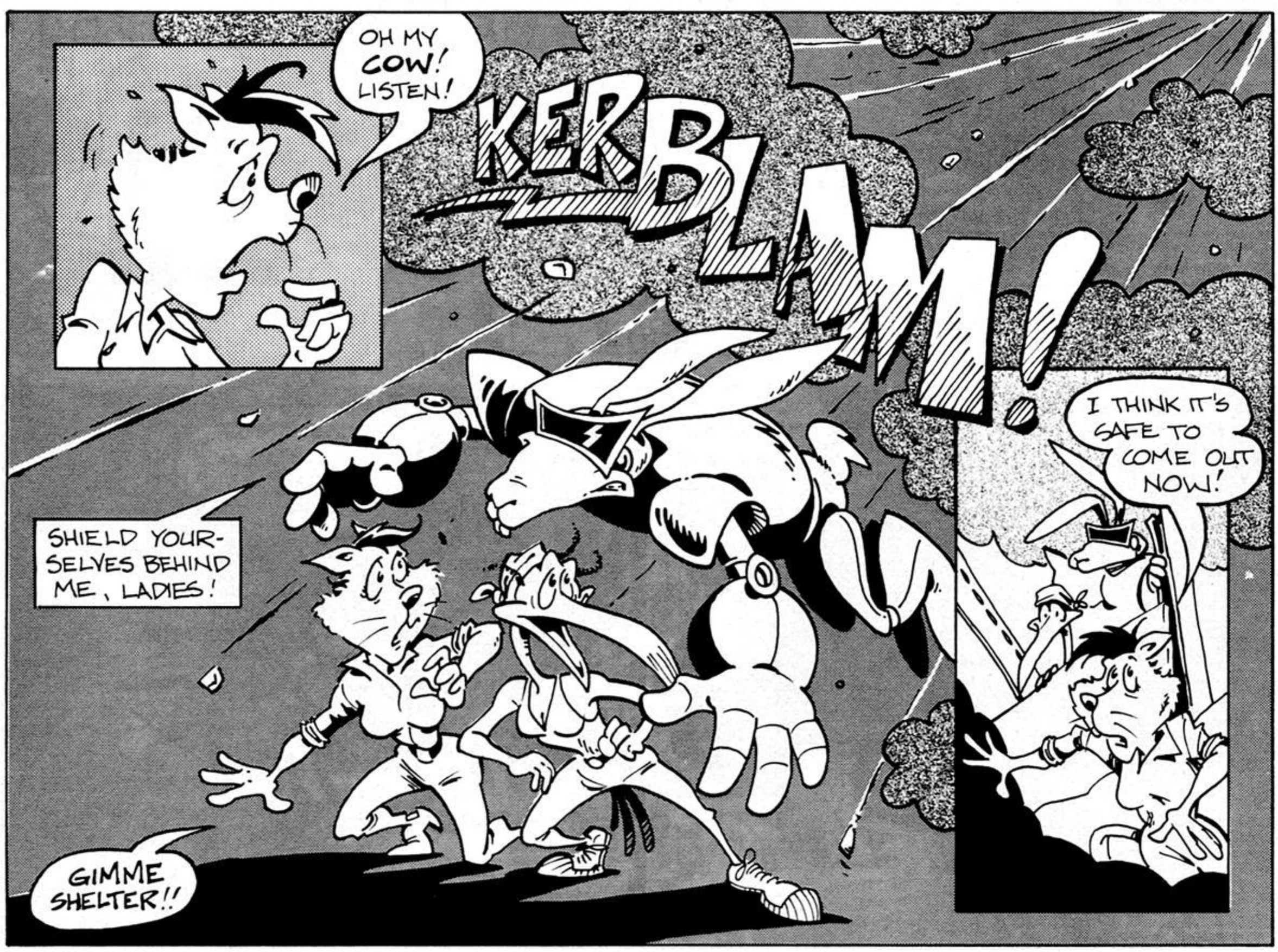

DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THE BLUE PLATE SPECIAL!

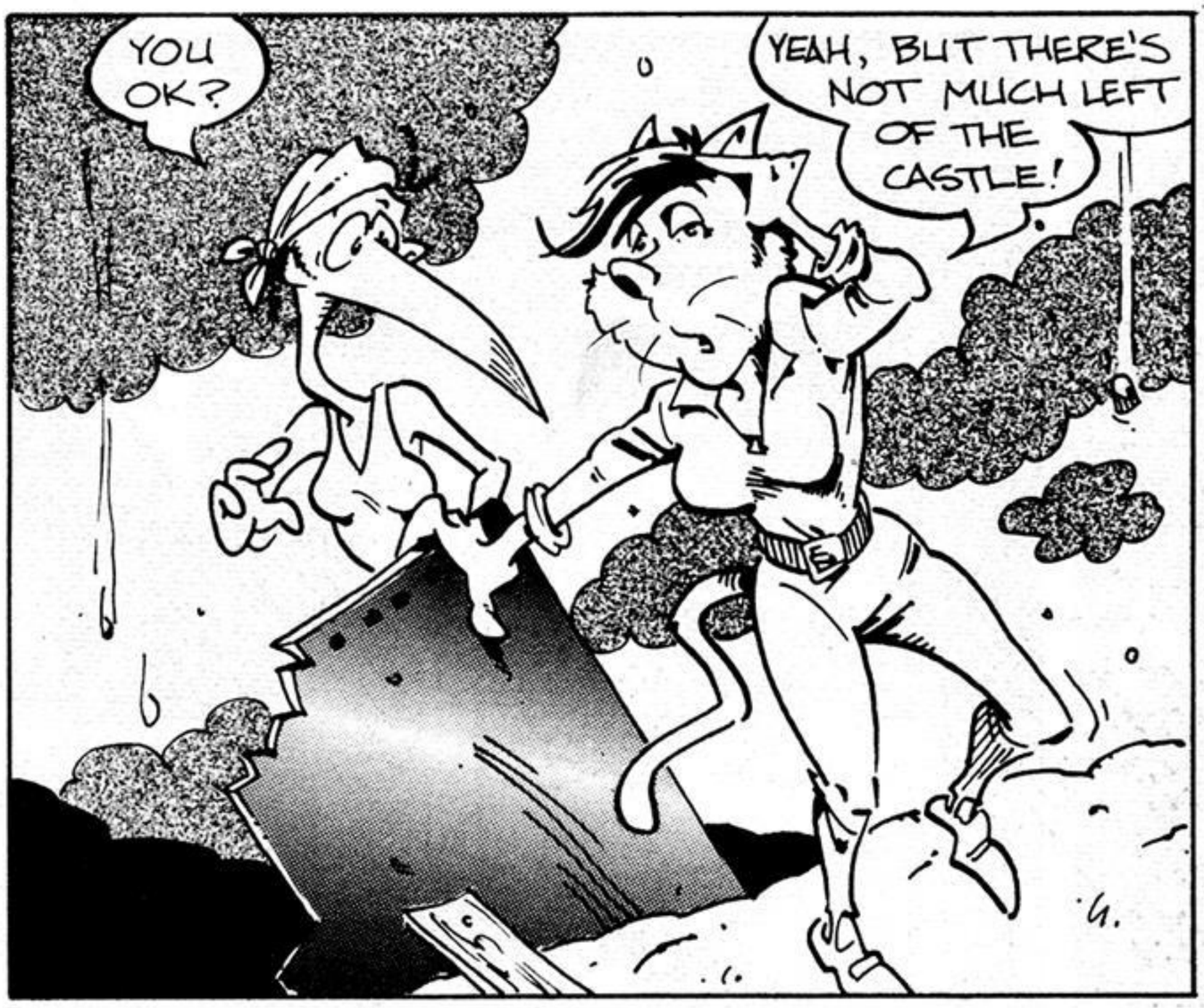
I SURRENDER! LET ME MAKE ONE THING PERFECTLY CLEAR, I AM NOT A CROC!

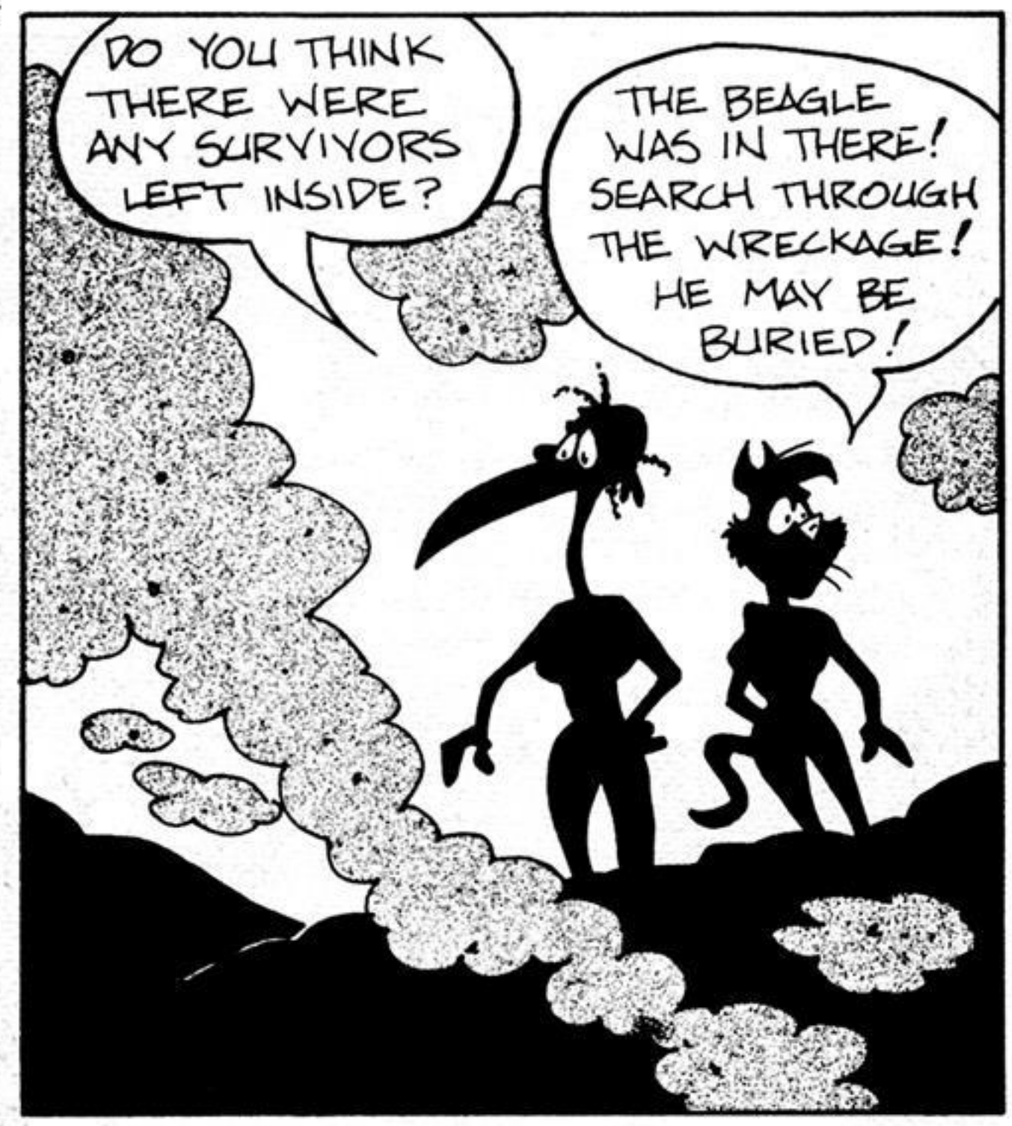

AH, MY BOY, COME TO PAY YOUR FINAL RESPECTS?
ALL THAT'S LEFT FOR ME IS TO EAT THIS MAGIC APPLE AND SLIP INTO THAT ETERNAL SLEEP, UNTIL MY TRUE LOVE AWAKENS ME WITH A KISS... OR A LUCRATIVE MOVIE DEAL COMES ALONG!
BUT, WHAT ABOUT ME?
MALT DINGY
IT'S ALL GONE SOUR, I'M AFRAID. MY DREAMS OF A WORLD-WIDE DINGYLAND ARE NO MORE THAN MOUSE KA-KA NOW!

THE CASTLE ABOVE US IS ABOUT TO GO UP IN FLAMES! YOU'VE STILL GOT A FIGHTING CHANCE! TAKE THE TUNNELS AND GET AS FAR AWAY FROM HERE AS YOU CAN!
BUT, BUT...
START A NEW LIFE! LEAVE EVERYTHING ELSE BEHIND! AND FOR GOD'S SAKE, FORGET YOU EVER EVEN HEARD OF THE WATCHDOGS!!


OK, BUT ALL I WANTED TO KNOW IS WHO AM I?!


OH MY COW! LISTEN!
KERBLAM!
I THINK IT'S SAFE TO COME OUT NOW!
SHIELD YOURSELVES BEHIND ME, LADIES!
GIMME SHELTER!!

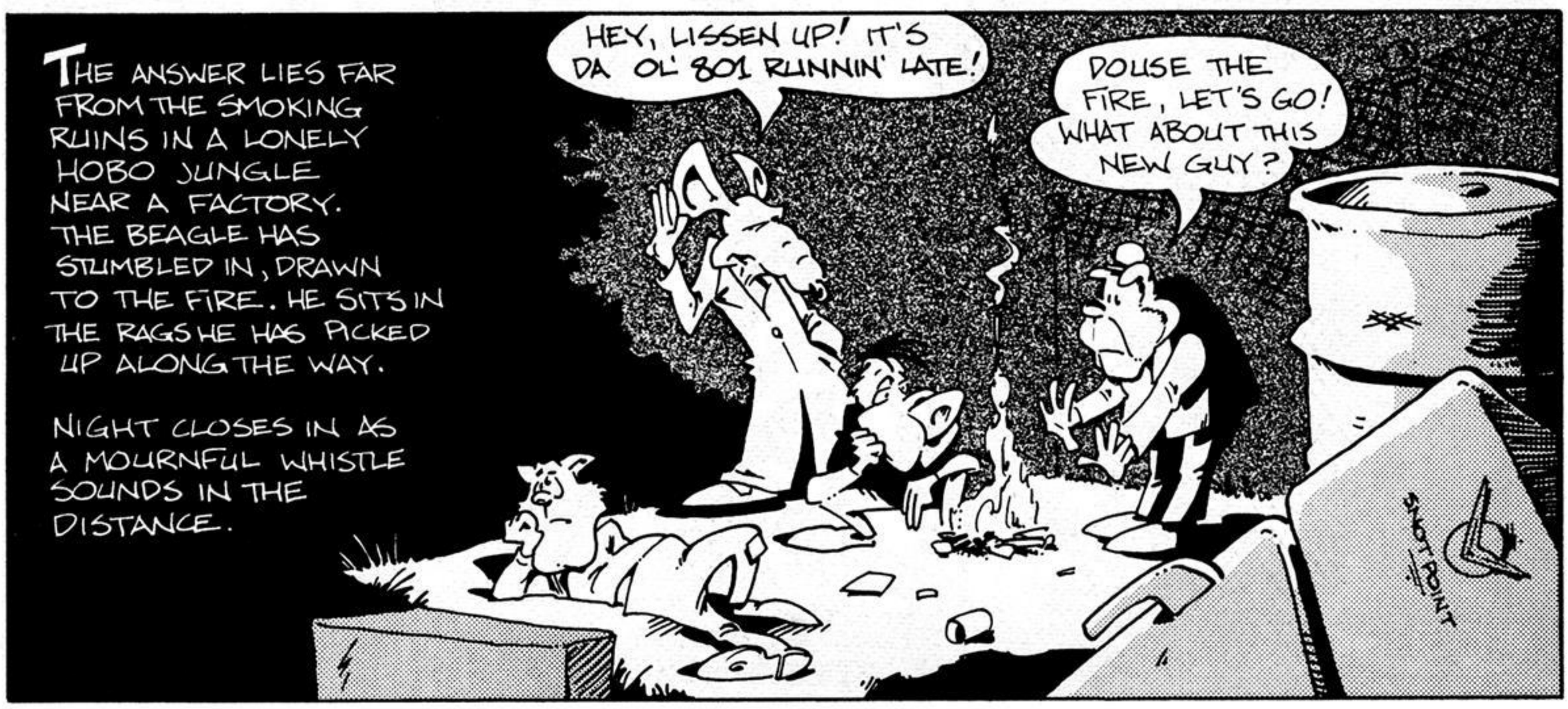

YOU OK?
YEAH, BUT THERE'S NOT MUCH LEFT OF THE CASTLE!


DO YOU THINK THERE WERE ANY SURVIVORS LEFT INSIDE?
THE BEAGLE WAS IN THERE! SEARCH THROUGH THE WRECKAGE! HE MAY BE BURIED!

CASSIE, OVER HERE!! I FOUND HIS COSTUME! IT'S COVERED WITH BLOOD!!
BUT THERE'S NO BODY!

HE JUST CAN'T BE DEAD... BUT WHERE IS THE BLUE BEAGLE?!

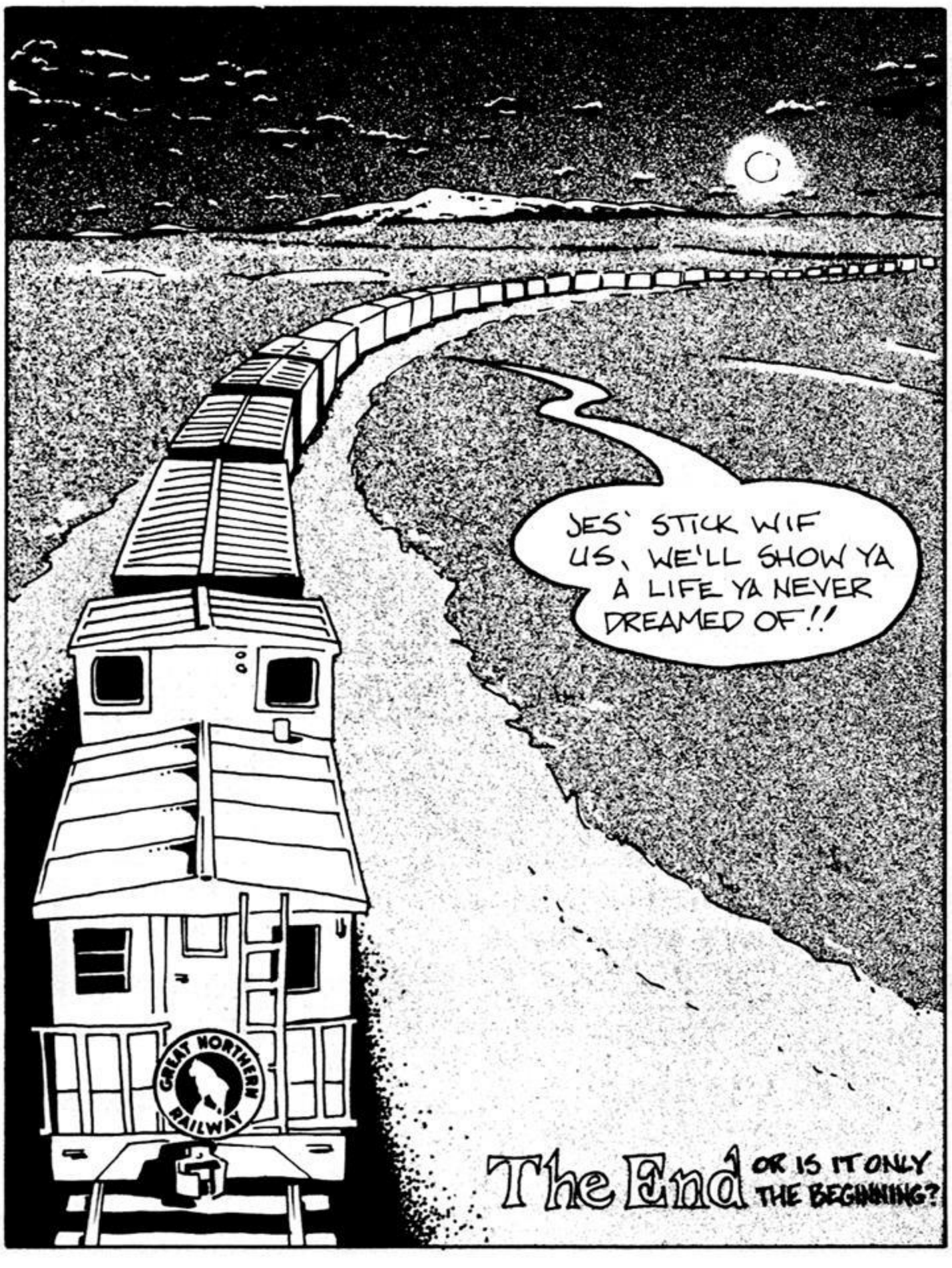
EPILOGUE


THE ANSWER LIES FAR FROM THE SMOKING RUINS IN A LONELY HOBO JUNGLE NEAR A FACTORY. THE BEAGLE HAS STUMBLED IN, DRAWN TO THE FIRE. HE SITS IN THE RAGS HE HAS PICKED UP ALONG THE WAY.
NIGHT CLOSES IN AS A MOURNFUL WHISTLE SOUNDS IN THE DISTANCE.
HEY, LISSEN UP! IT'S DA OL' 801 RUNNIN' LATE!
DOUSE THE FIRE, LET'S GO! WHAT ABOUT THIS NEW GUY?
SHOTPOINT

HEY, BUDDY, COME ON, WE'S GONNA HOP DIS TRAIN!
YO' KIN COME TOO. BY DA WAY, WHAT IS YER NAME?
I-I DON'T KNOW! I JUST CAN'T SEEM TO REMEMBER!

THERE MUST BE A REASON AS TO HOW I GOT HERE, BUT I FORGOT, I THINK!
FORGIT IT, KID, SORRY I ASKED!
MAYBE I WAS SOMEBODY RICH AND FAMOUS... ONLY TALLER!
HURRY UP, YA DOAN' GIT A SECON' CHANCE AT DIS!

DOAN' WORRY ABOUT IT. WE'S ALL EQUALS ON DA ROAD! WE BE TAKIN' CARE O' YOU!
NORTHERN
RAILWAY


JES' STICK WIF US, WE'LL SHOW YA A LIFE YA NEVER DREAMED OF!!
GREAT NORTHERN
RAILWAY
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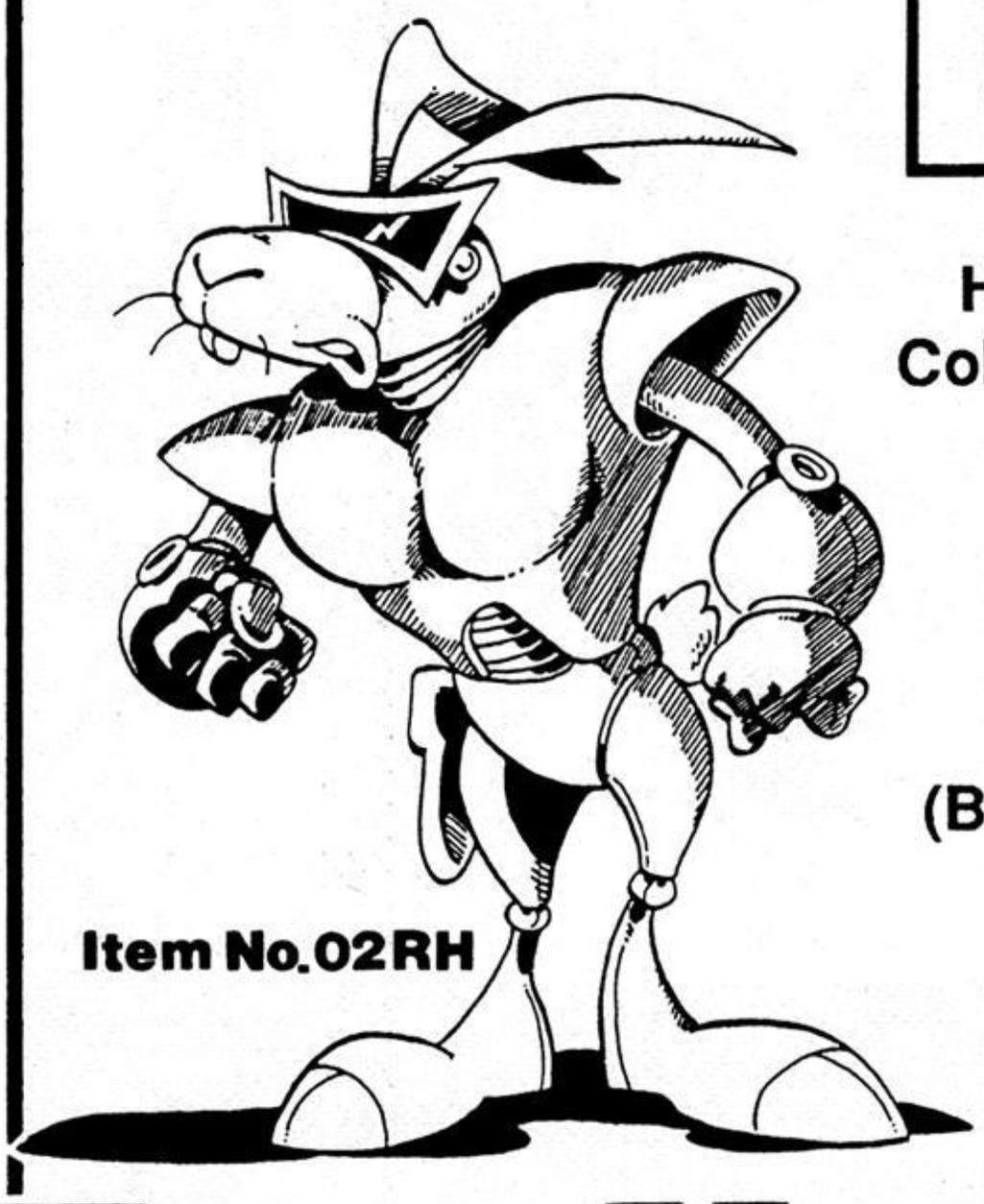

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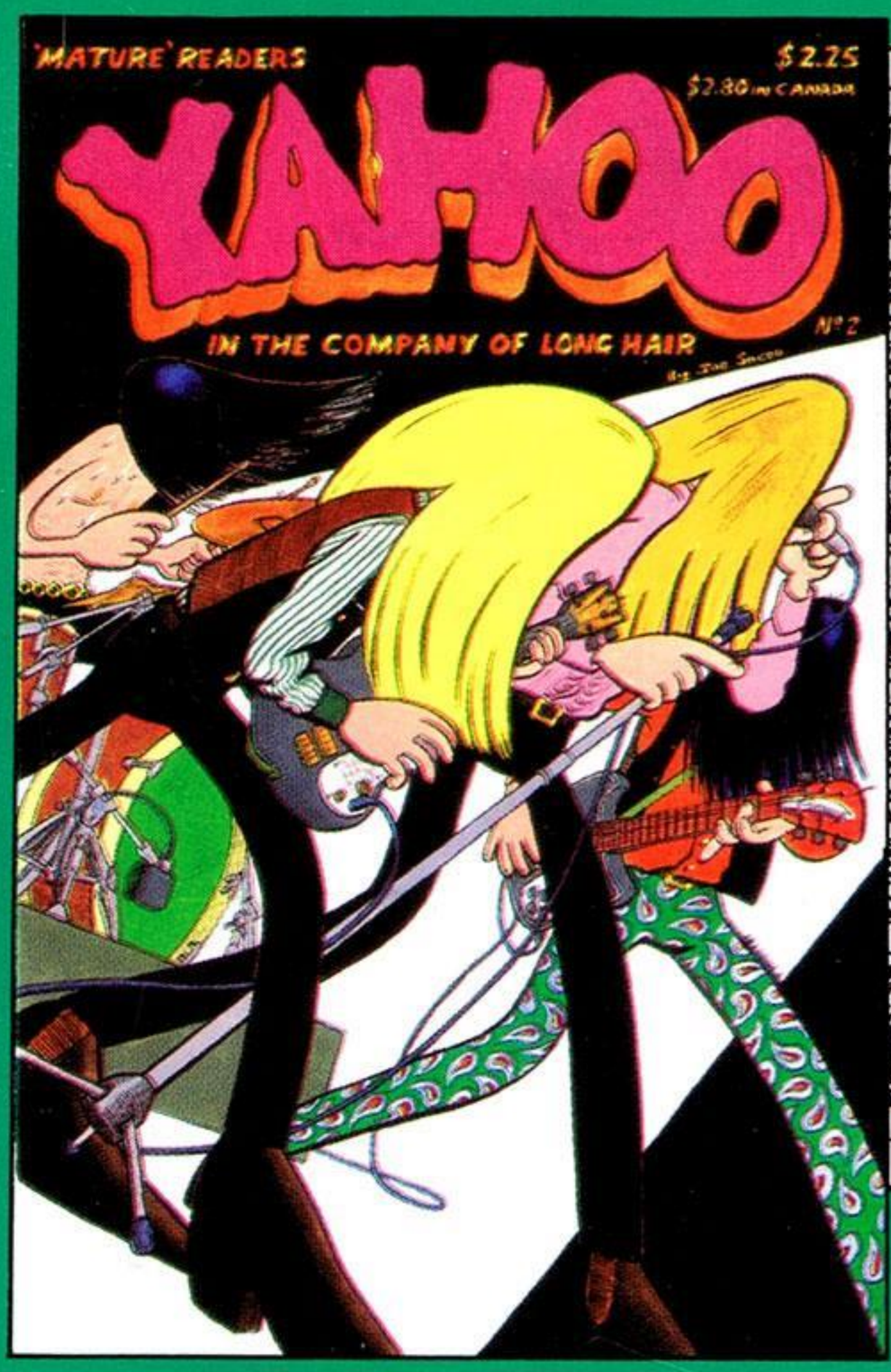

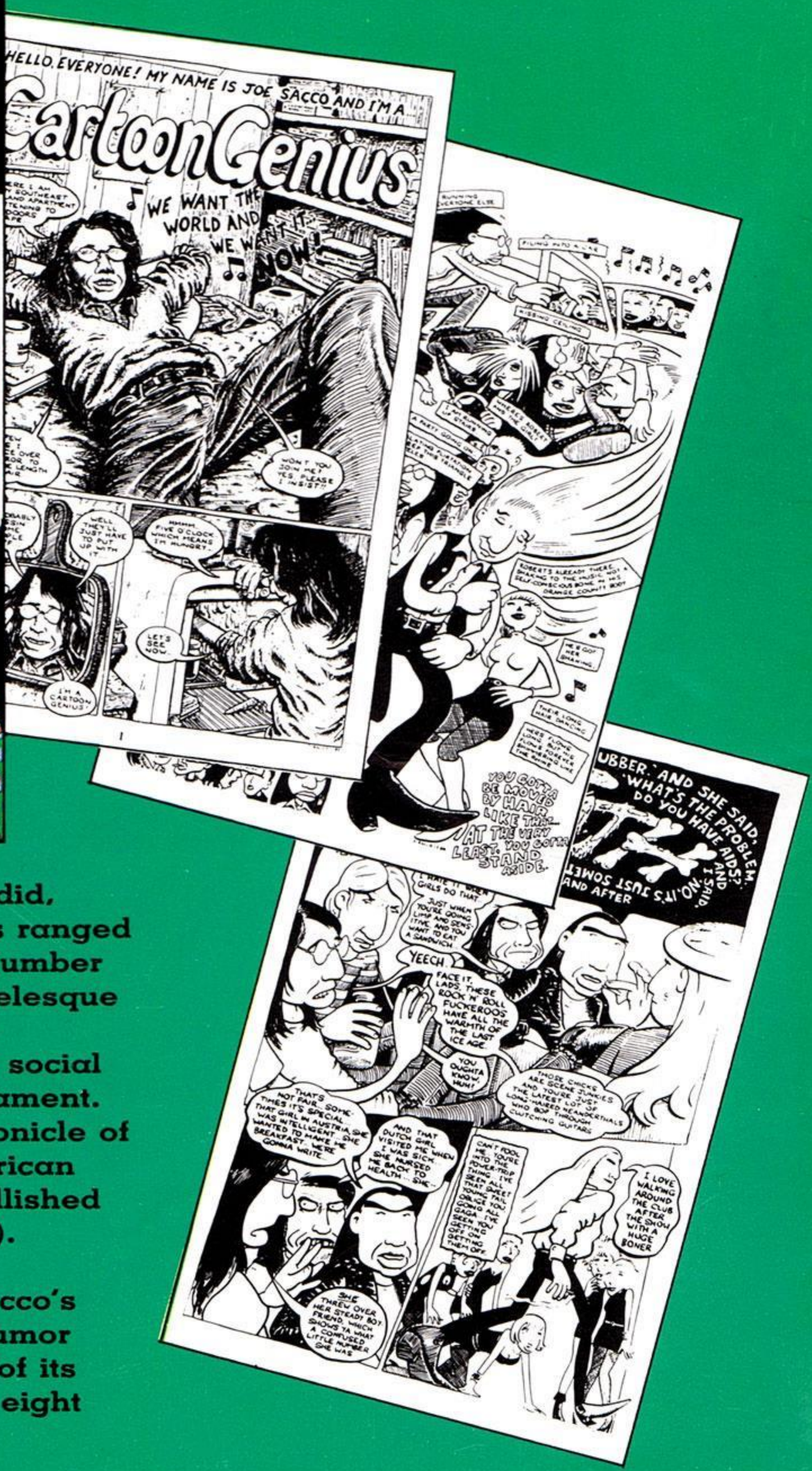

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